University of Alberta

The Problemmatic of Thinking in Heidegger

by

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Abstract

This thesis hazards to describe the path towards what Heidegger called thinking, with particular attention to the way in which thinking is itself called upon to forge this path. Given this dynamic, it is shown how thinking is properly to be considered the carving-out of a way itself. After an historical consideration tracing Heidegger's own course to the necessity of approaching thinking in this way, an effort is made to exegetically unfold Heidegger's notion of thinking, through an exercise in this thinking. By endeavouring to illuminate what Heidegger called thinking in this way, the importance of modality in his philosophy is made explicitly conspicuous, specifically qua modes of presence, and, with that, an intimated view to the essential relation of temporality and thinking is brought to light. This thicket of what is most salient in Heidegger serves, also, indirectly to provide a critical examination of the limits of thinking.

Preface

Our interest in the question "What is called thinking?" arises from a source not unrelated to the trajectory to follow out of, or beyond, it. Having advanced the most thorough and rigorous account of thinking, we will endeavour, in this paper, not only to trace the notion forwarded by Heidegger, but, more importantly, to strain that notion, pushing Heidegger as far as possible in an effort to discover where, in the end, he simply cannot go with thinking. This is not to be confused with seeking to identify where, in his own thinking, he simply left-off, nor with where he, for whatever reason, does not hazard to venture, nor, to be sure, with where he refuses to take his thinking. Rather, we are concerned with the inner possibilities offered by thinking at all, with the essential scope and limits of thinking's own possibilities, as offered up by Heidegger, and not in the least with the contingencies of Heidegger himself qua thinker. Thus, any possible situating of oneself outside Heidegger can be accomplished only in respect of a thinking which has articulated itself to its greatest fulfilment through him.

Throughout his career Heidegger persistently addresses what he sees as the philosophical tradition's consistent tendency toward what he terms onto-theology. He views philosophy, with scarce exception, as having conflated Being [*Sein*] and God [*Gott*], God and Being, handing down either and ontologised

theology, or a theologised ontology. For Heidegger, however, philosophy is properly concerned with the question of Being, and its relation to, and irresolvable difference from, any particular being [*Seiende*], including God. It is, therefore, a fundamental error to identify Being with God, or God with Being, even if God is held to be the highest, singularly unique being – the absolute being. With regard to the tradition of onto-theology, then, Heidegger is focussed on exposing, or attending to, the hyphenation which holds apart Being from God, while simultaneously also holding them in connection together.

Admittedly, however, Heidegger's translation of the hyphen seems arrantly one-sided in favour of the *ontos*, or Being, as betrayed by his lifelong preoccupation with the sole question of ontology, which in varying ways remains his concern throughout the entirety of is writings.

Heidegger's principal question asks: What preserves a being in its Being? This question can be rearticulated to betray the conditions under which it permits a response. Reformulated it reads: What: preserves a being in its Being. No longer posed in the interrogative, we can clearly see how for Heidegger the question is always already a question of essence, and the conservation of entities in (their) presence.

Within the context of this guiding question, Heidegger carries out a thinking that can, perhaps, best be approached and situated out of the enlightenment project, which Heidegger can be considered to have continued and fulfilled. He

turns to the history of presencing in an effort to ay bare the conditions which engendered what Kant once characterised as our self-incurred tutelage. Understood historically, now, however, Heidegger can longer have recourse to the make-up of the subject in its subjectivity in order to liberate thinking to itself, for this is, as we will see, offered by Kant as yet another □*ρχή* to which thinking finds itself immured. For Heidegger, on the contrary, across the various epochs of history, presencing articulates itself differently, varyingly, and the free poietic character of thinking is the echo of the poietic character of presencing. In other words, while presencing crystallises into successive orderings, or fields of presence, like ontological stanzas thickening [*dicken*] to compose the poetry [*die Dichtung*] of Being, so thinking keeps pace with the way presence shows itself, constellates itself, and cannot settle itself in attachment to but one secured ordering. That said, Heidegger cannot accept Kant's universal subject, cannot 'turn to the one' [*unus-versus, vertere*], to the human being, as the fundamental centre of all entities in an ordering of presence. Here, Heidegger shifts to a thinking of origin, an originary thinking [*oriri*, coming forth], which traces the emergence of fields of presence. In this move, he emancipates thinking from knowing, as the origin does not offer itself as a *principium*, but as the springing forth [*die Ursprung*] of multiple presencing, undominated by a given first principle [□*ρχή*]. Thus, thinking is plied away from its traditional vocation of grounding constant presence, and so producing bodies of knowledge about the

timeless truths of entities and their principled relations within a specific field of presence, and is, rather, charged with complying with presencing as an originary event, with corresponding to, by following, the issued arrival of orderings of present entities in presence, of beings emerging into Being.

Notwithstanding the extent to which thinking is, with Heidegger, liberated to itself, it can be seen that, for Heidegger, thinking is always still a matter of presencing, and essence. Thinking may be, as will be shown below, concerned to hold open a futural space, to hold open possibility for the sake of the deliverance of Being, but it is nonetheless always a matter of Being, of being *in* Being. And this is not wrong. Being in Being is, indeed, the matter for thinking, and thus for philosophy. Philosophy is the thinking of Being, and the being of thinking – for long ago it was announced that thinking and Being are the same. The concern for both, or for one, is the same concern. It must be, then, that any shift beyond Heidegger is a move, as Levinas phrases it, to the otherwise than Being, or beyond essence, which we can appropriately understand as also otherwise, or beyond, thinking. For if thinking is essentially concerned with being *in* Being, it cannot itself extend to the 'outside' which first permits this 'inside' where thinking dwells, which it itself delimits.

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The Problematic of Thinking in Heidegger

The history of Philosophy is
finding out how difficult thinking is.
-Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names*

§1. Introduction

The Task at Hand:

Our task presents a threefold character: One, we are "asking along with"; two, it is with a particular thinker, and thus correlated, or oriented in some way, by a particular thinking, or philosophical project, in this instance that of Martin Heidegger; and, three, we are asking, in the manner determined by one and two, a particular question, namely, What is called thinking? In order properly to ask this question with Heidegger, it is advisable that we first clarify to some extent what this exercise entails. It is evident that we must remain aware that we are not alone in asking our question. We are asking along with another thinker. A thinker, moreover, who is met in the form of a text. Our own pursuits are thus already situated, and we must acknowledge that we will be guided by a thinking which Heidegger has supplied. However, we are neither simply following Heidegger's lead obediently, nor attempting to strike out on our own into new territory, perhaps reversing the roles and seeking to trail Heidegger along with us. This

means, by way of preclusion, that we are neither simply endeavouring to offer up a faithful repetition of Heidegger's thinking, in the mundane sense of merely re-presenting his project, simply reiterating what he has said; nor, however, can our aim be to refute his work outright and subsequently offer in its place our own more correct theory of what thinking really is. Indeed, both of these options would miss the point altogether. For Heidegger there is an essential need to distinguish between a collection of thoughts and *a* thinking. Any body of thoughts whose concern is knowledge, that is, establishing certitude about the properties of objects, about contents, concerned to determine what something is, is not involved in what Heidegger calls thinking. The pursuit of knowledge espouses as particular goal oriented approach to thinking, the pursuit of which betrays an implicitly unquestioned thinking, but the end of which results in a mere collection of thoughts. For Heidegger, as will be shown, a thinking, which is our concern, is not itself an end, nor does thinking properly have any such end. Rather, it is only on the basis of a particular thinking that the calculation of the world in terms of ends is first made available at all. Thus, far from either of the aforementioned avenues, our task will be animated by an attempt to explicate some of the most salient (if unrecognised by the tradition) features of Heidegger's notion of thinking, with a particular view to preparing a way in which we might glimpse how time figures in this thinking.

Explication calls for us, literally, to "unfold" Heidegger's notion of thinking. Bringing out what is involved in thinking, what is enfolded within this notion, is to work out the various, and varying, folds in such a way that what is implicit is rendered explicit. Exegesis, "working out", is accordingly the most appropriate approach to phenomenological explication. To accomplish this requires, to be sure, that we are faithful to Heidegger's thinking, and that, in large part, we grant his texts a measure of authority in guiding our own project, and the course this paper can take. Just what form that guiding and authority assumes in our project needs to be addressed. Explication is neither to work *from* a given philosophy, as though it were an extrinsic basis on whose grounds our inquiry could, with assurance, derive its validity and direction, as thoroughly adscititious. Nor does explication ask for us to work *on* the matter at hand, where we would again find ourselves thinking *ab extra*, this time merely *about* Heidegger's notion of thinking, making of it the object of inquiry, and manipulating it in whatever way.[1] "In what follows, we shall not think *about* what thinking is. We remain outside that reflection which makes thinking its object."[2] In each case, what is

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[1] The word manipulation derives from the Latin *manus*, meaning 'hand'. To my mind, the term 'working *on*' evokes, variously, images of dough-kneading, and mechanics with their engines, along with self-improvement efforts towards better managing (*manus*) yourself, to the vast authority handed to politicians in the form of a mandate (also derived from *manus*), and, notably, the thematic manifestation of objects commonly considered to constitute reality. Each of these images gives a clear sense of being external to that upon which one works. In the case of thinking, this externality will be seen as problematic.

[2] Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking?* (Trans. J. Glenn Gray). New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1968, p. 21. *Was Heisst Denken?* Gesamtausgabe, I. Abteilung, Band 8. Vittorio Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 2002. Both the English and the German editions of this

called thinking is treated in two ways. First, it is held, as the theory provided by a philosopher, to be something stable, and externally available to be thought about, whether as the presupposed abstract form in accordance with which one carries out further inquiry into things, or as the explicit theme of inquiry itself, outside of which the inquirer stands. In other words, they make of a thinking a mere object of thought. Secondly, and in consequence of the first manner of treatment, one's own thinking is surreptitiously mustered to execute working on the problem of what thinking is. That is to say, throughout an inquiry into thinking as the object of thought, no matter how deft the ingenuity of the analysis, or the manoeuvres in logic, precisely one's own inquiring thought goes unquestioned in the process, and so, *ispso facto*, does thinking itself. But "The question 'what is called thinking?' can never be answered by proposing a definition of the concept *thinking*, and then diligently explaining what is contained in that concept."[3]

This raises some peculiar considerations. Stated quite plainly, the difficulty is to figure out how, or if, thinking could catch a glimpse of itself in the act, so to speak. By making itself an object of thought, thinking abstracts from precisely what makes of it an object of thought – thinking. This fashion of inquiring into thinking "may be compared to the procedure of trying to evaluate

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text will be collectively referred to hereinafter by the abbreviation 'WCT,' with the English pagination being given first, and the German pagination given following a slash where applicable.

[3] WCT. P. 21.

the essence and powers of a fish by seeing how long it can live on dry land."[4] It is both the intentional character of thinking, as always a 'thinking of...', and the originarily temporal character of thinking, as the "process" of thinking itself, if you like, which undermines its efforts to make of itself an object, and thus to solve the problem of just what thinking is. In making itself the object of inquiry, it necessarily abstracts from that which it wants to know. This difficulty for reflexivity in the attempt to lay hold of thinking's 'what' is revealing. Immediately, the natural proclivity for thought to conceive its object representationally is frustrated. Not because it failed to exert sufficient effort towards thinking its object, or resolving the 'problem' it might have posed for itself, but because the nature of the matter [*die Sache*] to be thought does not admit of being fixed in an objective presence, of remaining present. The difficulty is one of modality, modes of presencing, and thus ultimately a problematic of temporality.

And yet, we have neither posed the question, What *is* thinking?, to which an answer of the sort which could lay claim to *know* what thinking is would be demanded; nor do we have the task of working on or from a certain given idea of thinking. We want to work *out* the question. Our task is reflective explication. Our question reads: What is called thinking?

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[4] Martin Heidegger, "Letter on 'Humanism'" (Trans. Frank A. Capuzzi) in *Pathmarks* (Ed. William McNeil). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. P. 240.

To explicate, or work out a question, is not the same as announcing a problem to solve in the form of a question. We are not concerned with problems masquerading as questions. We cannot work out a question from outside the question. Indeed, we cannot even ask it from there. Accordingly, we must enter into the questioning, and take part in the questioning within which our question is an issue, and from out of which our question first arises. Thus, Heidegger's question, *Was heißt Denken?*, or ours in English translation, What is called thinking?, is not at all an opportunity to think *about* thinking, let alone about Heidegger's thoughts on thinking; rather it is an invitation to participate in what is called thinking, to become involved in the questioning which asks this question, and to inhabit the thinking in and out of which this question is asked. However, the very first movement towards entering into the questioning which gives rise to the question, What is called thinking?, betrays an involvement in a certain mode of questioning already. No sooner do we try to question thinking than we are thinking out of a form of questioning already, we are operating within a certain mode of thinking. Working out the question cannot take place separately from working out of the questioning which asks it, in which we already find ourselves placed. Our own thinking, as the thinking operative in asking the question, must be submitted to interrogation in the first instance of questioning thinking. As soon as we place the very questioning of the question in question, we have discovered that to explicate, to work out, inasmuch as it demands a 'moving into'

the domain of questioning, at once is also a 'from out of' where we already are. A certain turning [*wenden*], or twisting is at play in this questioning, and it is a reflexive twisting which first constitutes the very possibility of asking the question, while in the twist the question is disfigured [*verwunden*]. This is where we necessarily find ourselves situated in asking the question, What is called thinking? It cannot be asked without being asked by a certain way of thinking which is already at work, which already legislates, which already has even determined a certain range of possible questions to ask, and modes of asking. This presupposition, at least, is inescapable, with the result that an interrogation of the question cannot be accomplished if it is to mean being interrogated by a thinking free of presupposition. The question does not stand before us to be asked, rather, it is where we stand that is already put in question in the very broaching of the question.

Where We Stand:

In a lecture course delivered in 1952 under the title which asks our very question, Heidegger concedes that "Normally, a question strives directly after the answer. It correctly looks for it, and sees to it that the answer is obtained. The answer disposes of the question. Through the answer we free ourselves of the question [*Das gewöhnliche Fragen trachtet unmittelbar nach der Antwort. Es sieht mit Recht nur auf diese und darauf, daß sie beigeschafft werde. Die Antwort*

erledigt die Frage. Wir selber sind durch die Antwort der Frage ledig]."[5] This characterisation of the usual way of inquiring reflects the usual way of thinking, the way we normally pose and investigate (*in-vestigium*) questions, and thus go about asking them. This way of questioning articulates our current stance by being exemplary of the usual thinking which issues in this way. Typically, we raise a question which announces a gap in our body of knowledge. The answer is something which at least in principle is knowable, if not already known. The question disappears when that gap is filled, when the knowledge which satisfies, or adequately solves the problem makes the question obsolete. Questions are usually asked for the sake of the answers, answers which, in supplying knowledge, dispense with the question. Heidegger continues the preceding lines, however, by interrupting our sense of familiarity with thinking, and goes on to assert that "The question, 'What is called thinking?,' is of a different kind.... It only looks as though we knew what the question really asks. The question itself still remains unasked [*Die Frage »Was heißt Denken?« ist anderer Art.... Nur dem Anschein nach ist bekannt, was die Frage eigentlich frägt. Die Frage selber ist noch ungefragt*]."[6] This seems to raise two questions. The first, and more obvious, question is: What is so different about this question, how is it distinguished from others? The second, and less obvious question asks how it is that from our current usual stance, our normal questioning, we find ourselves

[5] WCT. P. 158-59 / 162-63. Translation slightly altered.
[6] WCT. P. 159/163.

raising such an unusual question. Put another way, how are we supposed to participate in the questioning within and out of which our question is raised, if that very questioning stance in which we already find ourselves is precisely what is undermined by this unusual question? Or, how can our usual questioning have originated such an unusual question at all?

Even in posing these questions we have begun to perform precisely what is different in the question, What is called thinking?, or more accurately, have begun to articulate the different type of thinking that asking this question calls for, despite the fact that at the same time each of these questions perforce instantiates the thinking characteristic of where we already stand. For Heidegger, a central trait of our stance today is that the origin of our questions, the source of our thinking, our usual stand itself, remains unquestioned, so "it remains obscure how this shaping of the nature of traditional thinking takes place."[7] Further still, *that* this source which sustains our thinking the world remains concealed, is itself concealed.[8] Nevertheless, this refusal to relinquish the self-sufficiency of thought, and to permit there to be a basis upon which thinking occurs, that is, presupposes, is not a mere human failing; nor is it remedied by getting a mention which brings it to our attention, as though it had been a simple oversight due to

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[7] WCT. P. 45.
[8] Concealment of concealment is what Heidegger calls 'mystery.' Cf. "On the Essence of Truth" §6,
p. 148.

some kind of negligence for which no one is culpable. Rather, this trait is intrinsic to our prevailing stance today.

In *The Age of the World Picture*, Heidegger tells us that "Metaphysics grounds an age, in that through a specific interpretation of what is and through a specific comprehension of truth it gives to that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed. This basis holds complete dominion over all the phenomena that distinguish that age."[9] So our particular way of determining the reality of what is real, and our own understanding of truth and of what makes something true, is rooted in, and derived from, a distinct metaphysical configuration (supplied by a metaphysics which provides these criteria of reality and truth), on the basis of which we think, speak, and move about the world. Needless to say, this way of viewing the world is equally deployed in, and as a result of, the way in which we conceive ourselves as free, rational human subjects. It must also be the case that an inquiry into the grounds of what determines the real for our age, and the metaphysical grounds on which that determination is based, will reveal the way in which the concealment happens, and the further concealment of this concealment. In other words, it must be inherent to the metaphysics which grounds our age, that it provide a basis which recovers itself in its interpretation of what is and of truth in such a way that there remains no discrepancy between

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[9] Martin Heidegger, "The Age of the World Picture" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (Trans. William Lovitt). New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977. P. 115.

the basis upon which a thinking arises, and that thinking itself. Where thinking can be identified with metaphysical ground, metaphysical thinking will have come entirely to its own, consummated in the satisfaction of grounds to the extent of being self-grounding, free of presupposition, and will thus exhaust in principle the possibilities for thinking, as it conceives, and at this point, determines, thinking to be. This raises a question of limit, specifically about the limit of grounds.

Our modern metaphysical age is distinguished and was inaugurated by the development wherein "Man becomes that being upon which all that is, is grounded as regards the manner of its being and its truth."[10] In other words, the decisive characteristic of the modern metaphysical age is the establishment of the human being as subject, and the simultaneous shift in which things become objects. We should attend to how this shift comes about, what its source is, and what the implications are for the 'interpretation of what is' and the 'comprehension of truth' which it brings to bear.

For this we can look to the word 'subject.' The word 'subject' is derived in English from the Latin term *subiectum*, which is itself a translation of the Greek word *hypokeimenon* which means literally "that-which-lies-before" or beneath. There was initially no implication that this term attached or referred to the human being over against all other beings (ob-jects). Rather, as

[10] "The Age of the World Picture", p. 128.

hypokeimenon we have the under-standing of a ground, of that which lies beneath all else which it gathers unto itself and fixes, which endures beneath and holds together "its own fixed qualities and changing circumstances."[11] We can see in the works of Aristotle that the *hypokeimenon* was conceived in three basic ways. In the realm of knowing it was the first premises. In the domain of becoming it was the four *aition*, or causes, and for Being itself, *ousia*, it was substance. From this threefold account it is clear that "This metaphysical meaning of the concept of subject has first of all no special relationship to man, and none at all to the I."[12] Again we can elucidate this by looking to the mediaeval world. There, what is subject, *subiectum*, what grounds beings and provides warrant to the truth, is not man, but a "personal Creator-God"[13] as the first and highest cause and being. The specific interpretation of what is and comprehension of truth which prevailed for the scholastics, was that all entities had their ground in and through their relation to God as creatures, beings created by God, *ens creatum*. "Here, to be in being means to belong within a specific rank of the order of what has been created – a rank appointed from the beginning – and as thus caused, to correspond to the cause of creation."[14] This rank-order of being was exhaustive and was called *Natura*. It was with the advent of the modern period that we find the event wherein the human being becomes the *subiectum*, becomes 'that-which-lies-

[11] "The Age of the World Picture", Appendix 9, p. 148.
[12] "The Age of the World Picture", p. 128.
[13] "The Age of the World Picture", p. 130
[14] "The Age of the World Picture", p. 130.

before' and assumes the role of centring, and the position of ground beneath not only its own properties and changing conditions, but those of all entities as such. "Man becomes the relational centre of that which is as such."[15]

What brought about this shift in the essence of the human being from *ens creatum* to subject? What is the source of this change? What prompted this fundamental rearrangement of the world? What were the conditions which called for such a reconfiguration of the way the world was conceived? In Heidegger's view the transformation "arises from the demand of man for a *fundamentum absolutum inconcussum veritatis* (for a self-supporting, unshakeable ground of truth in the sense of certainty)."[16] We discover elsewhere that "certainty of a piece of knowledge consists in my being sure of the truth of a proposition."[17] The ground of such surety would be that on the basis of which being sure of the truth of one's proposition could be certified. "Certainty therefore presupposes truth!" But on what basis can the truth of my proposition be guaranteed? On what basis could one come to hold, with certainty - that is, could one be sure that the representation they have constitutes genuine knowledge? "Obviously the insight that what is possessed is true, which in turn means that this truth is justified or grounded.... Being certain of a truth is plainly insight or the completed insight

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[15] "The Age of the World Picture", p. 128.
[16] "The Age of the World Picture", p. 148.
[17] Martin Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic* (Trans. Michael Heim). Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984. P. 119.

into the grounds of truth. The ground of certainty is accordingly the ground of truth…become insight."[18] Certainty in the truth of a proposition can be certified by the one who proposes the proposition, because the ground of one's certainty converges with the ground of that about which one is certain, the truth of which one certifies when those grounds become manifest. The certainty is, therefore, at bottom a self-certifying. In the need for a ground of certainty is a need for the self to offer grounds to itself. In response to the demand for a ground to certainty, the human being becomes subject in becoming self-grounding.

The demand to provide grounds can be seen most clearly to animate Leibniz' formulation of the principle of sufficient reason, formulated for the first time explicitly as a principle. Indeed, the principle itself, more than being a response to the demand, announces the demand to which it is the proper response. In his series of lectures entitled *The Principle of Reason* Heidegger says of the modern metaphysical age: "Only what is *brought to a stand* in a founded *representation* counts as a being. But a representation is a founding representation only if reasons are rendered to the cognizing, representing subject as founding reasons. To the extent that this happens – and only to that extent – cognition satisfies the *demand* that it be founded. This demand speaks in reason itself insofar as the demand requires that all cognition render reasons."[19]

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[18] *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, p. 119-120.

[19] *The Principle of Reason* (Trans. Reginald Lilly). Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996. P. 27 (italics added). Hereinafter 'PR.' It should be noted that the principle of reason is here held

But if the human being assumes subjectivity in response to a demand for a ground of certainty, we can ask further, whence this demand for a ground of certainty? What is the source, the origin of this demand? The source emerges when the ground which secured the accordance of propositions with their matter is removed. Consider the following descriptive hypothetical in the way it describes the mediaeval metaphysical age: "If all beings are 'created,' [*ens creatum*] the possibility of the truth of human knowledge is grounded in the fact that matter and proposition measure up to the idea [preconceived in the *intellectus divinus*] in the same way and therefore are fitted to each other in the unity of the divine plan."[20] The truth of propositions is secured in its accord with that about which it proposes because both share a ground in the divine intellect. Truth is essentially revelatory. An essential triangulation through the divine ensures the possibility of correspondence between propositions and their matter.[21] The demand for a ground of certainty is satisfied in this age by a creator God. It is when we are deprived of this shared ground in an external source of timeless truth, shared with the rest of the mundane world, that the demand for the provision of the ground of certainty announces itself to us, demands of us.

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to be constitutive of what it means to be, in as much as that means to be a founded object of representational cognition, and so is not merely a regulative principle of thought.

[20] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 139.

[21] This same mode of grounding truth as correspondence through triangulation in a third is operative, albeit differently, in Plato's theory of Forms. The timeless world of forms performs the same role as God.

In response to this transmogrification in the mode of presencing, "the theologically conceived order of creation is replaced by the capacity of all objects to be planned by means of a worldly reason [*Weltvernunft*] that supplies the law for itself and thus also claim that its procedure is immediately intelligible (what is considered 'logical')."[22] The exigency of the modern metaphysical project becomes providing the "foundation for the freeing of man to freedom as the self-determination that is certain of itself."[23] The human being, moved into the centre, now the *subiectum*, falls under the demand to provide grounds, and to ground itself, to self-ground. As self-grounding ground, the subject cannot accept its position as inherited, as betraying an origin or basis. Human being as subjectivity grounds, but is not itself grounded, except insofar as it is self-grounded. In other words, even the metaphysical basis which distinguishes and originates the modern age must be recovered by self-grounding subjectivity as something which it itself grounds. Human subjectivity responds to the demand for the ground of certainty, once liberated to itself as the provider of reason [*Grund*], by founding the original demand itself. In this way subjectivity draws up all presupposition into itself, and conceals this concealment of its originating source by installing itself as the pre-eminently original, and counter-founding that upon which it is based, to the

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[22] Martin Heidegger, "On the Essence of Truth" (Trans. John Sallis) in *Pathmarks* (Ed. William McNeil). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. P. 139.
[23] "The Age of the World Picture", Appendix 9, p. 148.

degree that it even grounds itself as grounding activity.[24] It is only in proceeding as self-grounding subject that the claim to objectivity can come to mean free of presupposition.

The question we have to ask here is: having turned on our own thinking stance, and disclosed an historical origin of the modern metaphysical stand in self-grounding, an origin to which it is beholden, do we find the space opened up in which the question, What is called thinking?, can be asked out of the metaphysical stand which it at once puts into question? More importantly, does this source of our modern metaphysical thinking essentially withdraw from the attempts to be thought under the metaphysical framework? In other words, does the source of modern metaphysical thinking as self-grounding essentially fall outside the purview and scope of the metaphysical framework? If so, then withdrawal is the originating source of metaphysical thinking, which as such directs thinking beyond its metaphysical incarnation, undermining any purport on the part of metaphysics to absolute hegemony. But further, can we even ask this question without being forced to admit that we have, on the basis of modern metaphysical thinking, been reoriented to a questioning which does not have knowledge of its object as its goal, but has already been more deeply situated in the metaphysical tradition by moving into its origins and source?

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[24] This conception of subjectivity as the ground of grounding is found in the transcendental subject of apperception advanced by Kant. Cf. *The Principle of Reason*, p. 88.

As the origin of modern metaphysics, any such thinking or sphere is bound to be unfamiliar, uncanny, to the extent that we are accustomed to the modern metaphysical realm in which we already are standing, which is our everyday way of thinking. But as the origin and source of that stance which we had already been granted, it too is, in a deeper sense, where we have essentially always already been. It is in this sense that Heidegger remarks how it is a "curious, indeed unearthly [*unheimliche*] thing that we must first leap onto the soil [*den Boden*] on which we really stand."[25] It requires a leap, because there is no path of continuity leading by way of principles from the modern metaphysical thinking to the soil in which that thinking is rooted, and thus in which we are rooted as inhabitants of the modern age.[26] Modern metaphysics is decisively characterised [that is, in a way which leaves it 'cut off', *decedere*] by its independence from any origin or sustaining source. It is thus a defining trait of metaphysical thinking that it does not lead thinking to an origin other than itself, to anything more original. Metaphysics reserves itself alone to play the role of origin. The question which arose above, and was then posed again about the origin of the demand for a ground of certainty in the transition between the

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[25] WCT, p. 41/44.

[26] This language obviously invokes Descartes famous image of the tree of philosophy in which metaphysics are the roots which nourish the other sciences which make up the trunk (physics) and branches (remaining sciences). Heidegger's question, in relation to this image, concerns the soil in which the tree first germinated, out of which it grew, in which the roots take hold, and from which they receive their sustenance throughout. Without the soil the entire tree would be altogether eradicated (thoroughly up rooted, from Latin *radix*).

mediaeval and the modern epochs, must be raised once more. What is it which calls for thinking to recall its origin? How has thinking been reoriented in such a way as to place in question its own status as arche? What could evoke thinking to become disabused of its independence, its (if we might be permitted a term from political science) character as self-sufficient neo-liberal subject, and to recollect its essential historicality, without thereby disavowing the peculiar character of modern metaphysics?

The Language of the Question, and the Question of Language:

Heidegger proleptically announces at the beginning of his second lecture series delivered under the title *Was Heißt Denken?*, that the question, What is called thinking?, admits of a fourfold ambiguity. There are four connected questions, four moments articulating the complex unity of the amphibolous single question. The four ways of asking the question, What is called thinking?, are:

1. What is designated by the word 'thinking?' What is it that is called 'thinking?' This is obviously a question of language, asking after the meaning of the word 'thinking.'

2. What does the prevailing theory of thought, namely logic, understand by thinking? What does the predominant philosophical position call 'thinking?' This is an historical question, asking what the word 'thinking' has come to mean for philosophy, in the history of philosophy.

3. What are the prerequisites we need to perform thinking rightly? What does proper thinking call for, require?

4. What is it that commands us to think? What, in general, and in the first place, calls upon us to think?[27]

With regard to the first question, concerning the name 'thinking,' Heidegger begins to loosen our ears, so to speak, in order to help us hear how the question can be asked in so many ways without being considered a mere linguistic ruse. It should be expected that this question, which has yet to be properly asked, as we discovered above, will also have to be heard to ask in a different way than the usual way of questioning from which it is, in some sense, a departure. If the metaphysical approach asks 'what is…?' questions, and then drives straight for an answer, this articulates its hermeneutical orientation to what is, and to truth. In other words, the form of the question bespeaks the ontology which raises it. The 'what is…?' question conveys a seeking for objective knowledge. This way of asking questions betrays a certain understanding of essence, of truth, and of what counts as an admissible being, of what it means to be a being, i.e., an ontology.[28] In asking 'what is thinking?' it has already been decided that we are looking for some thing that is named thinking, and we wish to discover its essence, that is, we

[27] WCT, p. 122/127.

[28] To enter into a discussion of Heidegger on these terms would be tantamount to presenting the entirety of his corpus, which is clearly beyond the scope of this paper.

want to know what it is. "That something is, and that it is such and such, is what we usually designate a fact."[29] Asking *what* thinking *is* seeks to establish it as a fact. Traditionally, metaphysics makes "the distinction between *what* something is, τί ἐστιν, and *that* something is, ὁτι ἔτιν. Later terminology distinguished between *essentia* and *existentia*, essence and existence."[30] In asking what something is, the question already suggests a fixed essence, in the form of what-ness, *quidditas*, which once determined will yield essential knowledge of that thing, should it actually exist or not. At the same time this suggests that essence itself is fixed, that what is really essential about any thing is unchanging and permanently present. *Essentia* determined and delimited the range of what was actualisable, on the basis of the inherent nature of what was actual. Metaphysical thinking operates within the field of the actual, on the basis of the above distinctions, and through the deployment of *ratio*. It is not critical here that we elucidate this circumstance further, what is important is to see how our question, in bringing our metaphysical stance into question, must ask what source demanded thinking generate or espouse these distinctions in the first place. What brought thinking to assume this form and not another? "By what authority, and on what grounds, is that distinction made? How and in what way is thinking called to this distinction?"[31] For our purposes now, it is enough to mention that

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[29] WCT, p. 161/165.
[30] WCT, p. 161/165.
[31] WCT, p. 161/165.

the shift in the language of the question is neither accidental, nor purposefully employed to inveigle the reader. In order to bring our thinking into question by referring it back to the soil in which it is already rooted, by which it is nourished and sustained, but which it is not itself equipped to ask about, the very language of the question must change in order that the question articulate itself in a way which brings our thinking into question, by disrupting its unquestioned operation. The shift in the language of the question announces, and brings with it, a shift in the thinking it requires and constitutes.

Our question is, What is called thinking?, and it articulates in its very wording the heteronomy of thinking. Thinking is not essentially the self-constituting activity of an autonomous, self-grounding rational subjectivity, but is constituted in its response to a call, is constituted as called. It is the ambiguity of this verb 'to call,' '*heißen*,' which gives to the question its several ways of being asked. But even in the basic sense of naming Heidegger suggests there is a deeper sense in which naming is a calling. "By naming, we call on what is present to arrive."[32] This sounds rather opaque, but if we consider what happens when we ourselves hear our name, when we ourselves are called by name, it becomes clearer how naming is a form of calling out what is named. When addressed by name, we do not remain indifferent, as though one name among many had been said, but we are immediately alerted, made to respond by turning ourselves over

[32] WCT, p. 120/124.

to the source of the call and offering ourselves to it, offering a response, even if that is to ignore the call. In this sense, what names does more than just designate, it calls on something to shore itself up as what it is. For instance, to use Heidegger's example, "This town is called [Edmonton]. It is so named because that is what it has been called. This means: the town had been called to assume this name.... To call is not originally to name, but the other way around: naming is a kind of calling, ... Every call implies an approach, and thus, of course, the possibility of giving a name."[33]

Philosophy, and that means metaphysics, has given the name 'logic' to the predominate doctrine of what decides on proper thinking. Heidegger traces the origin of this word 'logic' from its Greek roots as the understanding which concerns the λόγος, logos. Logos, in turn, is the substantive, the noun to the verb λέγειν, legein. He tells us that "Logic understands λέγειν in the sense of λέγειν τι κατά τινος. To say something about something. The something about which the statement is made is in such a case what lies beneath it."[34] Logic understands thinking as propositional assertion. This way of speaking, speaking propositionally, proposing, is for logic "the basic characteristic [*Grundzug*] of thinking."[35] It is, then, from the beginning, the case that thinking is a function of speaking, of language, and not the other way around. "Only when man speaks,

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[33] WCT, p. 123/128-29.
[34] WCT, p. 155/158.
[35] WCT, p. 155/158.

does he think – not the other way around, as metaphysics still believes."[36] In other words, our thinking issues out of a way of speaking, and understands itself on the basis of that way of speaking which is, therefore, determinative of the fundamental principles of thought. Heidegger offers the example of the law of non-contradiction. "In order for speech to be possible in the first place, the something about which something is said – the subject – and that which is said – the predicate – must be compatible in speech." In other words, what are conjoined in the proposition, the predicate as assigned to the subject, cannot speak against (contra-dict) each other; what is said in the predicate cannot negate the subject to which it is assigned, or, what is the same, the proposition cannot speak against itself. "Only because thinking is defined as λόγος, as an utterance, can the statement about contradiction perform its role as a law of thought."[37]

It is on the basis of the first principles, which, as first, ground all other principles, that the grounds are provided for the objectivity of objects which is the ontological horizon of modern metaphysics. These principles are characteristic of the logos, of propositional utterance. And it is out of an understanding of proposition, on the basis of logic, that thinking conceives of proposing. The first

[36] WCT, p. 16. That Heidegger is right to attribute this position prioritizing thinking over language can be gleaned by two citations, one from Descartes' Second Meditation at the inauguration of modernity, which runs: "For although, without speaking, I consider all this in my own mind, yet words stop me, and I am almost led into error by the terms of ordinary language." The second citation, evidencing just how trenchantly the belief is ingrained in recent metaphysics, is from David M. Armstrong's "The Nature of Mind" where he is found asserting: "Thought is not speech under suitable circumstances, rather it is something within the person which, in suitable circumstances brings about speech" (p. 298).

[37] WCT, p. 155/158.

principles, then, emerge within the horizon of an inherited way of speaking, a particular understanding of language. This understanding has culminated in modern metaphysics with the human being as the self-grounding ground of every thing. The human subject, in other words, comes to be seen as *cogito*, later as transcendental ego of apperception, as the I which issues every utterance, the I which accompanies every proposal, every case of proposition, the I which deploys propositions, and language. What is revealed in this is that the autonomous subject which proposes is not the origin of the language, or of the understanding of language, in which it always already moves; rather, the subject is originated by the way this language speaks, bespeaks itself through the response its address demands. Even the modern metaphysical subject does not propose its own language. "[I]t is not we who play with words, but the essence of language plays with us .... For language plays with our speaking [*dann spielen nicht wir mit Wörtern, sondern das Wesen der Sprache spielt mit uns .... Die Sprache spielt nämlich so mit unserem sprechen*]."[38] Thinking emerges out of language, with language, and on the basis of an understanding of language it gains its framework. When, as modern metaphysics, thinking comes to deny its foundedness, its condition, and comes to "ignore completely the oldest natural cast of language,"[39] it takes itself as the measure, and condemns any speaking or language which does

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[38] WCT, p. 118/122. Translation slightly altered.

[39] Martin Heidegger, "Language" in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Trans. Albert Hofstadter). New York:
Harper and Row Publishers, 1971. P. 193.

not conform to it as an expression of the unreal.[40] In so doing, metaphysics attempts to exert its authority over language, and reduce it to a deployable instrument at the instituting behest of human ends. In limiting language to something originated under the control of subjectivity, and completely reflective of the self-grounding metaphysical subject, it is determined in advance how language is properly to be used, prior to speaking about any thing. "Because it stems from the dominance of subjectivity the public realm itself is the metaphysically conditioned establishment and authorization of the openness of beings in the unconditional objectification of everything .... In this way *language* comes under the dictatorship of the public realm, which *decides in advance what is intelligible and what must be rejected as unintelligible.*"[41] Under the charge of metaphysics, language comes to be seen ideally in its formal structure, and the preoccupation with symbolic logic its most appropriate philosophical expression.[42] In this way, metaphysics is consummated in the laying hold of itself as its own highest achievement, wherein it becomes answerable to nothing save for the conditions it has set under which 'thinking' can provide answers. This end leaves metaphysical thinking to change only in accord with itself, as something which has drawn its own end into itself (entelichal), and so reached a goal the

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[40] Metaphor would derive its possibility and identity as metaphor here.
[41] "Letter on 'Humanism'", p. 242.
[42] "The widely and rapidly spreading devastation of language not only undermines aesthetic and moral responsibility in every use of language; it arises from a threat to the essence of humanity." – "Letter on 'Humanism'" p. 243.

quest for which extends back to Aristotle's ousiology. But, in the attempt to control language, metaphysics is seeking to subsume its own origin and source under its framework. Is it here, in the consummation of metaphysics in turning to its own soil, that it discovers what cannot be approached metaphysically, what withdraws from metaphysical thinking? Does metaphysical thinking itself direct us beyond itself when it reaches its limit?

Founded by its rootedness in language, the range of thinking is coextensive with language.[43] The ambiguities in language will thus be reflected through ambiguities in thinking, for "multiplicity of meanings is the element in which all thought must move in order to be strict thought."[44] The extension of thinking must therefore exceed that of reason and logic. Any attempts to limit the possibilities of what language can say, or is already saying, consequently, will be a violent concealment (suppression) of possibilities for thinking.[45] Reason and logic have to be understood to express *a* response of thinking to a call for such thinking. *Ratio* evolves within thinking, it is by no means exhaustive of it, and certainly in no position to pass judgement on it.[46] "The question: 'What call has directed the mode of thinking to the λέγειν of the λόγος?,' is an historic question,

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[43] Our question could just as easily read "What is called language? What calls us to Language?" given the "sameness" of speaking and thinking. It is also worth noting that "אמר in Hebrew means both to say and to think." This equivalency of thinking and saying within the Hebrew language is affirmed by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in his *Lonely Man of Faith*, p. 71 fn.

[44] WCT, p. 71.

[45] It is out of this thinking that notions about the 'margins of philosophy' can first arise. It is in the totalising activity of metaphysical thinking that margins are first established.

[46] Cf. "Letter on Humanism," p. 240. "Thinking is judged by a standard that does not measure up to it."

perhaps *the* historic question, though in the sense that it determines our destiny. It asks what it is that destines our essence to think according to the λόγος, that directs it there, and there turns it to use, and thus implies many possible turns."[47]

Given that we stand in the language of metaphysics, and it is out of that stand that we must come to ask the question, What is called thinking?, John Sallis' formulation of the task, in the form of a chiasmus (characteristically Heideggerian), is succinct: "What is required is no substitution at all in the sense of an activity in which we, assuming mastery over language, extricating ourselves from our rootedness in it, would so shape it as to render it appropriate to the task of thought. Rather we must surrender the language of metaphysics by recovering from the metaphysics of language."[48]

What is needed is not a substitution, not the establishment of new roots, or the provision of still deeper grounds, for the language and thinking in which we find ourselves already rooted. What is needed is to let these roots be rooted at all, to permit them a soil. What is needed is "a transformation in thinking."[49] That implies a response to a call for such change, which will articulate itself in a transformation in speaking. "Man speaks in that he responds to language. This responding is a hearing."[50] We must come to hear the question as it asks itself,

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[47] WCT, p. 164-65/168.
[48] John Sallis, "Towards the Movement of Reversal: Science, Technology, and the Language of Homecoming" in *Heidegger and the Path of Thinking*, p. 156.
[49] "On the Essence of Truth," p. 143.
[50] "Language," p. 210.

and this will give rise to a shift in the language of questioning and thinking, whereby we will be extricated from being held hostage to propositional thought. To further guide our efforts to ask the question, What is called thinking?, we will conclude our lead-in to the questioning with the following passage from Heidegger's lecture course on the same question, in which he is most explicit about the form he thinks the response is to take:

> Die Antwort auf die Frage »Was heißt Denken?« ist zwar ein Sagen, aber keine Aussage, die sich in einem Satz festlegen ließe, mit dem wir die Frage als eine erledigte auf die Seite bringen könnten. Die Antwort auf die Frage »Was heißt Denken?« ist zwar ein Sprechen, aber *sie spricht aus einem Entsprechen.* Es folgt dem Geheiß und hält das Gefragte in seiner Frag-Würdig-keit. Wenn wir dem Geheiß folgen, werden wir des Gefragten nicht ledig.
>
> Die Frage läßt sich nicht nur jetzt nicht, sondern niemals erledigen.

> The Answer to the question "What is called thinking?" is indeed a saying, but not a proposition which could be fixed in a statement with which the question could be put aside as settled. The answer to the question "What is called thinking?" is indeed a speaking, but *it speaks from out of a Correspondence.* It follows the call and keeps what is questioned in its question-worthy-ness. When we follow the call, we do not become free of what is being questioned.
>
> The question cannot be disposed of now, nor ever.

§2. Asking the Question Again: The Question That Holds Itself Open: *What is Called Thinking?*

We should be struck almost *prima facie*, yet not trivially, with the concern for how we are to think the very question which asks after thinking? How are we properly to approach this question thoughtfully without presupposing precisely what is in question, namely thinking? Must we not already know how to think, and thus know already what is called thinking, in order to think through this question? It would seem that only on the basis of knowing what thinking is, and how to think properly, could we correctly constrain our thinking and rigorously investigate this question which stands before us – could we reliably think about, and that means ask, this question. This would, however, be to commit one of the cardinal sins against correct reasoning. Such a presupposition would render our inquiry circular. Does this circularity, inherent to the question itself, destitute the question, condemning it to meaninglessness? Is the circularity of a vicious nature? Or perhaps it indicates by its circularity that it is not in need of being asked, that it acts only as a reminder that we already know what thinking is, and thus this particular question, What is Called Thinking?, has been banished in its questionability, that is, it has already been solved as soon as it is asked. In both these cases, however, we do not stay with the question, but hastily cast it aside on

the basis of the presupposition involved. If we are to remain with the question, and let it question, then we must let it place in question the presupposition itself which would have the question annulled. And this it does in two ways: it impugns the hegemony of the systematic of reason, the logic whose authority is being invoked as the exhaustive essence of what thinking is; and, consequently, it places in question the illegitimacy of presupposition itself, which is prescribed by *ratio*.

Because we are asking this question, we will attempt to stay with it, to let this question guide and direct our thinking. It must, therefore, remain as it is, it must be sustained precisely as a question. But to leave our theme in the form of a question throughout, such that the matter under thought is not being offered up in advance as what must be overcome and transformed in the name of a given purpose or directive, is not, then, to remain unoriented in our thinking, nor to have surrendered to a thoughtless groping, far from what is called thinking at all. Leaving the question to be a question, the question will itself serve as what orients our thinking as we attempt to follow the movements prescribed by the question, and let it be asked. Orientation in our thinking will be prescribed by the question to which our thinking defers. We will venture to question it, and let it question – we will let it ask what as a question it asks. While the question, What is Called Thinking?, is what is being asked, it also, as long as it remains a question, remains questionable, and must then itself, in a sense, ask to be thought, and call upon us

to think it. And there is a real sense in which what is truly worthy of questioning invites a thoughtful response. However, as Heidegger warns, "We must guard [*hüten*] against the blind urge to snatch at a quick answer in the form of a formula. *We must stay with the question* [*Bleiben wir bei der Frage*]. We must pay attention to the way in which the question [*die Frage*] asks [*frägt*]: what is called thinking, what does call for thinking?"[51] This very question asks for thinking, and in a bid to let us hear the question speak in a way we might initially not have heard, our translator reiterates the question in an unusual turn of phrase: what does call for thinking? Here, Heidegger is making efforts to open the question up as he alerts us to guard against the proclivity to close it off. This way of asking the question draws out the way in which it demands to be thought, as all genuine questions do – but perhaps this particular question, above, or before, all others, calls for thought in an essentially unique way.

In approaching this particular question we unavoidably find ourselves situated in a context involving presupposition. The problem is not how to escape this situation, nor by what means we could dispel all presupposition, given the acknowledged necessity which attaches to it. Here the question asks to be questioned differently, and invites us to ask different, less customary, questions in order to reorient our thinking. What we are made aware of is that our inherited way of questioning itself is presupposed in the asking of the question. Finding

[51] WCT, p. 48/51. (My italics).

ourselves within a situation of presupposition we must ask how to negotiate this situation, how to make sense of it, and out of it. We must invoke situated questions. We must question the situation. For this question in particular "is not without presuppositions. Far from it, it is going directly toward what would here be called presupposition, and becomes involved in it."[52] So the question now to be asked is not what is presupposed, for we have already admitted that the presupposition is thinking itself and its inhabiting of language. What is called for at this point is involvement with presupposition, leading, we must presume, to some form of essentially productive circularity. Only once we are thoroughly in the fold can we begin the work of unfolding. But still the requirement remains ambiguous. How should we go about deepening our involvement?

We will continue to ask the question: What is called thinking? In asking it anew we let it beckon us to thought, enjoin us to question, and let it grip us with its mysterious character. We let it engage us. The very nature of this question involves presupposition, and equivocation. On the one hand, it bids us to think, and so presumes there is the possibility [*Möglichkeit*] of thought insofar as the question can be asked; but with the other it divests us of possessing that capability [*Vermögen*], and in its being asked we are forced to admit we do not yet know what is called thinking, nor, consequently, how to think. This question opens us to having to learn what it is to think, but to do so precisely through (attempting)

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[52] WCT, p. 160.

thinking. It is this paradoxical predicament in which we must actively involve ourselves in approaching what slips away, that first permits getting underway with the asking of this question. And it is from this place that Heidegger embarks on his lecture course following this question when he says, "We come to know what it means to think when we ourselves try to think. If the attempt is to be successful, we must be ready to learn thinking.

As soon as we allow ourselves to become involved in such learning, we have admitted that we are not yet capable of thinking."[53]

The rather frustrating demeanour of our question, which both demands to be asked, and simultaneously denies us the capability of answering it, or dissolving it in a definition, holds us suspended in its questionability, and that is to say, it holds itself open as a question and refuses to be closed off, or solved logically, as it were. We should not let this discourage us, for perhaps as much is learned "not only from discovering logical answers but also from formulating logical, even though unanswerable, questions."[54] Ours is essentially not a question for the sake of an answer, at least not a strictly logical answer, but a question for its own sake, a question which questions.[55] Our disposition should accordingly not so much seek an answer, but hazard to unpack the question and interrogate it as to what it is asking and what of us it asks.

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[53] WCT, p. 3.
[54] *The Lonely Man of Faith.* P. 8.
[55] If our questioning leads us out of metaphysics, then we cannot anticipate or expect a logical answer, for "Only within metaphysics does logic exist." – "What Are Poets For?," p. 133.

§3. Was Heißt Denken? A Complex Question of Essence

The Essence of the Question as Essential: The Fourfold Asking:

Near the end of the series of lectures Heidegger reminds us that "the title of this lecture course is a question. The question runs: What is called thinking? As a course [*Vorlauf*] of lectures, we expect it to answer the question. As the course proceeds, then, it would make the title disappear bit by bit [*Schritt für Schritt*]. But the title of our lecture course remains – because it is intended as it sounds. It remains the title of the entire course."[56] The course which Heidegger travels, now bound in translation and entitled, thus begins not with the first sentence, nor ends with the last, but is offered as an accomplishment in questioning. "To accomplish means to unfold something into the fullness of its essence, to let it forth into this fullness – *producere*."[57] We are on course to attempt to involve ourselves in the unfolding of the essence of questioning. So the title, or the question posed by the title, is not presented as a proto-answer – at least not in the sense that an answer would supply a set of unquestionable propositional truths that replace what is questionable in the question. It is not a question that derives its identity from, and finds fulfilment in, the assertions

[56] WCT, p. 214-15.
[57] "Letter on Humanism," p. 239.

unfolded in the course of the lectures, such that slowly the question gives way to the answers, to resolution. Heidegger has not simply announced his topic in the form of a question. How could he have? To do so would be to neglect the ambiguity which permeates the very question, an ambiguity intolerable to a metaphysical framework. He would thus never have truly, thoughtfully, asked the question in the first place, never have permitted it to be questionable, never have questioned it. It is not enough, however, to refuse the possibility of a final answer. Rather, as was made clear in the Introduction, asking the question requires reflection on the origin of the question itself.

Our question remains in place, both the first place, and, as will become clearer, it remains in place to the end of the lectures and still after they have finished. It is, in this way, what places our thinking, but is not itself placed by it.

The question asks about something called "thinking". What is it that is called "thinking"? We might initially understand this question in the way we would commonly ask, "What is this/that called?" expecting to be supplied with the answer: "That's called a cat." In this case, the question asks about something that is named, and asks after the name for it. We have been given the name "thinking", so the question is: What does the term "thinking" specify? What is

named, or designated by the term "thinking" [*Was wird mit dem Namen »Denken« benannt*]?[58]

The question also asks, What [*Was*] (rather than who) names the thing named "thinking"? This question asks after the source, or the origin, of the name, as opposed to the thing named thereby, the thing to which the name is attached. This second way of posing the question thus moves past the first in search of the source and process by which the name became attached to the object it names. How has "thinking" come to be so-named [*wie wird das Gennante, das Denken, ...*]?[59] Is the name accidental? Even if it were, the naming must still be explained. The question calls for an account, an explanation, and to satisfy this demand we must supply a history. But a history of what? Language? Culture? Philosophy? Traditionally, philosophy has been considered the domain to which thinking properly belongs. In light of this, we must ask, Is philosophy, the story of philosophy's unfolding, the place where something is called "thinking"? And what, then, has this tradition called this thing designated as "thinking"? In other words, once the second variation of the question is posed, the first must then be reconsidered in its light. Philosophy has been responsible for naming something (rather than nothing), and a particular something (rather than something else) "thinking". This is why Heidegger asks in the second place, "What is it that for two and a half thousand years has been regarded as the basic characteristic of

[58] WCT, p. 113. Quoted in the German from p. 117.
[59] WCT, p. 113/117. Quoted in the German.

thinking? Why does the traditional doctrine of thinking bear the curious title 'logic'"[60]

The question concerning what is called thinking is, or at least has historically been deemed, a matter for philosophy – it is a philosophical matter. Furthermore, philosophy has designated this matter "logic". But philosophy seeks what something really is, in contrast to its mere appearances and manifestations. Hence, the first variation of the question, when asked out of philosophy, also and more deeply asks: What *really* is this thing so-named? Our first way of posing the question now asks two things: a. What existent object, or process is named thinking; and, b. What is the essence of this process? What is it really? And the second way asks about the tradition (philosophy) that asks the first question, and in anticipation, Heidegger suggests that philosophy has answered the first question with the discipline called logic. Thus the first two questions here seem both historiographical and philosophical.

In these first two ways of interpreting the question, *Was Heißt Denken?*, the word "what" [*Was*], the interrogative pronoun, refers to both the object and the subject of naming. *Was* has been considered as both the accusative and the nominative pronoun, respectively. In addition, we have taken *heißen* to mean "to be named", and taken "thinking" [*denken*] in the gerund. But an ambiguity of meaning is exhibited by the verb *heißen* as well. *Heißen* (to be called) does not

[60] WCT, p. 113/117.

simply, or solely, mean "to be named". By attending more carefully to the inherent multiplicity of meaning in the word *heißen*, "which as the verb of the question, sustains the sentence,"[61] two further variations of our question, What is called thinking?, are brought to bear on us, and a shift is effected from the interrogative pronoun *Was*, and its nominative resonance, to the verbal component of the question being most centrally at issue.

Heißen, to call, also means "to evoke" or "to require". For instance, the formulation "This calls for..." means "This requires...". What does the situation call for? means the same as, What does the situation require (of us)? What does it call forth (from us)? What does it demand of us? What does it require us to do? Heard in this way the question asks: Thinking requires...what? "What are the prerequisites we need so that we may be able to think with essential rightness? What is called for on our part in order that we may each time achieve good thinking?"[62] The verbal resonance is salient in this way of asking the question as it now interrogates not the "what" of thinking, but more deeply asks after the activity of thinking, the doing of thinking, the essential involvement in thinking itself. Probing past both the first and second ways of posing the question, Heidegger here investigates their assumptions, and the real action of thinking. Where in the first two dimensions of the question the interrogative pronoun *Was* held primacy of place, offering a more traditionally metaphysical project which

[61] WCT, p. 116/120.
[62] WCT, p. 114/117.

could just as easily have been formulated by the question *Was ist Denken?*, with the concomitant suggestion of a fixed essence that needs to be, and admits of being, determined; that is, suggesting that thinking is some thing, model, or determinately articulable set of principles with which our own "thinking" must bring itself into accord if it is to be correct or proper thinking. Any answer to the first two ways of posing the question will be correct if the statement adequately conforms to what the think named/naming thinking is. The primacy of the *Was* reflects and underscores the privileged conception of essence as *Washeit*, whatness. But our question is not *Was ist Denken?*. The inclusion of the verb *heißen* does not divest the question of the understanding discovered in the first two variations, the more common and immediately available meanings; rather, it retains and locates them concretely by pushing past them, and displaying their derivative status, their being founded. With the push past the first two questions, the questioning itself pushes past metaphysics and towards *its source*. With the verbal flavour of the question generated by the presence of the word *heißen*, the suggestion of *a fixed essence is undermined*, and with it the traditional conception of essence itself, and thus also do we find here a questioning which runs deeper and reaches behind the doctrinal "answer" to our question provided by the tradition of philosophy under the name "logic". We are now asking: What is required of us essentially for thinking to be essentially accomplished? By turning to the source of the metaphysical mode of thinking, metaphysics is not thereby

abandoned, but situated in its possibility. It is an issue of reorienting thinking to reflect on the ground which first permits metaphysics its interpretation of truth and essence – the two determinations at work in the hunt for answers in the for of "true" propositions. This sentence announces not only a shift in the notion of truth, but also in that of essence. "Truth does not originally reside in the proposition."[63] It additionally relocates the essential to the enabling origin of possibility. Separating the first two ways of asking the question from the second two is the decisive displacement of metaphysical questioning, and thinking, to the de-subjectivised (dehumanised) transcendental condition for its very possibility. It is upon this origin that essential thinking is required to reflect. In other words, the proper response called for is dehumanised transcendental reflection, thinking the source of possibility.

We are forced to confront yet another consideration here. If *Was* can be both object and subject, as in question-versions one and two, and in the third way of asking, *Was* again stands in for the object we seek, namely, that which thinking calls for, there must be a fourth question in which *Was* again becomes the subject of the sentence. Where *Was* is the subject of the active verb *heißen*, "calls", we find ourselves asking: What calls (for) thinking? What bids, demands, summons, enjoins, calls-forth thinking at all? This fourth question presses still further behind the third, and together they ask after what essentially moves in and

[63] "On the Essence of Truth", p. 143.

through thinking. While the third, as we discovered, asks what thinking bids, summons, enjoins, or requires us to do; the fourth, more primordially still, asks: What calls for the thinking that we do?, that is, What calls forth, provokes, solicits thinking in general?, What is it that bids us to think [*was ist es, das uns heißt...zu denken*]?[64] As Heidegger later articulates the question, "what is it that calls us, as it were, commands us to think? What is it that calls us into thinking?"[65] Here we are asking after the emergent call to which thinking at all is the response. Question three addresses being called to think the origin which enables the possibility of thinking. The fourth question asks still further after the originary calling to which thinking is the response.

We now have four questions which are four variations on a single, complex question – one question which asks in four different, yet interrelated, ways, What is called thinking?

1. What, as existent and essentially, is named "thinking"?

"What is designated by the word 'thinking'?"

2. What so names thinking; that is, how is it that whatever it is becomes so-named in our tradition, and what is it that our tradition has understood by this name?

"What does the prevailing theory of thought, namely logic, understand by thinking?"

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[64] WCT, p. 114/117. Quoted in the German.
[65] WCT, p. 114.

3. What is it that thinking calls (for)?

"What are the prerequisites we need to perform thinking rightly?"

4. What is it which calls for thinking / calls thinking forth?

"What is it that commands us to think?"

As we have shown, the variations are interrelated in several ways. In the first place, the series of questions betrays a logic of progression by asking ever more deeply after the origin and essence of thinking, taking its compass from the preceding question and what remains unthought, or still to be asked, in it. Each subsequent variation continues to maintain a relation to every previous variation by situating it derivatively, and thus deepening the meaning of our explicit question in its singularity. More specifically, this progression is one which moves back transcendentally to deeper conditions for each of the four unfolded questions, arriving ultimately at the fourth variation which effectively asks after the transcendental condition for the possibility of thinking in general.[66] And Heidegger affirms that all four ways of asking What is called thinking? "belong together by virtue of a union that is enjoined by one of the four ways."[67] He continues on to assert that it is the fourth manner of questioning which is decisive,

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[66]In should be noted, however, that the nature of transcendentality referred to here is the provision of conditions for possibility as such, and has lost its Kantian attachment to the constituted subject.
[67] WCT, p. 114/118.

and which holds in union the complex of variations.[68] The transcendental character of the fourth and decisive version of the question is confirmed by Heidegger explicitly when he says that it asks for "That which directs us to think, gives us directions in such a way that we first become capable of thinking, and thus *are* as thinkers only by virtue of its directive."[69] The inherent polysemy of the question What is called thinking? is bound and held together at bottom by its transcedentality, out of which all other possible meanings are asked, inasmuch as they are made possible on its basis, and "toward which all four ways are pointing."[70] The unfolded unity of the question, then, marks a questioning which originarily asks after the possibility of a thinking's possibility.

But there are two further structures of interrelation between the variations. Questions one and two, as we saw, share in asking after the object and subject of naming – what is named thinking? and what names thinking? While questions three and four ask after the object and subject of calling-for, requiring – what does thinking call-for, require? and what calls-for, requires thinking? Thirdly, variation four has a kinship with the second question, and three has a kinship with one, both grammatically and in content. While one and three, both understanding the pronoun *Was* as the object of the sentence, inquire into what thinking really, or in essence, is, and what essentially belongs to thinking, in turn; question two

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[68] WCT, p. 114/118.
[69] WCT, p. 115/119.
[70] WCT, p. 114/118.

asks for the source of the naming, and four asks for the source of the activity of thinking in general.

The manifold of the question's meanings are gathered together and located originarily in the fourth meaning, which is the question's deepest and primary form. "Properly understood," says Heidegger "the question [*Was heißt denken?*] asks what it is that commands us to enter into thought, that calls on us to think."[71] As a complex interrelation of four questions held together, yet permitted their distinction, located by, and properly understood out of the fourth way of being asked, the question *Was heißt denken?* demands a difficult synechdochal movement to thinking, if the question is to be stayed with at all, wherein both the unity of the fourfold question which is one, and the distinctness of each question unfurled by the fourth, must be kept in mind at once.

Our Essential Involvement With the Question:

Granting what has been said, if we attend still more closely to the question, then we must immediately recognise how we ourselves are implicated in it (but how else could we explicate?). In its decisive meaning the question asks after what it is that first calls upon us to think. We found this fourth question to be decisive, and Heidegger explains that it is decisive because "it sets the standard."[72] How does he mean the question sets the standard? In the very call to question the source of thinking, that is, in the call which submits itself as *the*

[71] WCT, p. 115/118.
[72] WCT, p. 157/162.

question of thinking, Heidegger identifies what 'sets' the standard for thinking. In poignant contrast to the self-standardising autonomy of metaphysical thinking, which in the form of a logical framework provides the abstract measure for proper thinking to bring itself into accord with, we are confronted with a beckoning *to* what requires thinking, *by* what requires thinking. In its very questioning this question sets the standard, "For this fourth question" he continues, "itself asks for the standard by which our nature, as a thinking nature, is to be measured."[73] It should be noted that no pronouncement is made regarding whether the call is properly heard, or heeded, or reaches us, just that it issues the call which first asks after the standard by which our thinking nature will be measured. Within the question itself, then, it is certain that it is "asking for something that concerns [*angeht*, goes to] ourselves because it calls upon [*anruft*, calls to] us .... It is we ourselves to whom the question 'What is called thinking' is addressed directly [*unmittelbar angesprochen werden*]."[74] Do we not find an explicit interrogation of ourselves, of the essence of our thinking in the third question? In no uncertain terms it "inquires about us, it asks us what resources we must rally in order to be capable of thinking."[75] It is thus this third question which the decisive fourth version most immediately calls for(th), which is why Heidegger asserts that "the

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[73] WCT, p. 157/162.
[74] WCT, p. 116/119.
[75] WCT, p. 157/162.

third manner of asking is closest to the fourth."[76] In calling upon us to think what calls us to think, in issuing a call that asks to receive the reflection of thinking itself, as what called on thinking for thought, the fourth question asks for a response. It is because it asks for thinking that it sets the standard by providing what is to be thought about in the call. It is because it asks for thinking to *respond* that it asks *for* the standard of our thinking nature. In other words, the fourth question unfolds the third, and in the third question concerning what is required for proper thinking, the question leaves open the propriety of the response to the fourth. The standard by which our essence as thinkers is to be measured is provided through our response in thinking the essential source of thought. The call asks for thinking to place itself in question. The measure, therefore, cannot be provided from the outside, but can only be set by thinking's own compliance in response. The resources which must be rallied are contingent upon the thinking which must displace itself in questioning itself. Thinking sets its own standards here, and accomplishment can thus never be understood as completion. That thinking sets standards, however, should in no uncertain terms be understood to mean the autonomous human subject provides the measure of itself. "Human beings are all the more mistaken the more exclusively they take themselves, as subject, to be the standard ...."[77] Heidegger warns that this prevalent metaphysical tendency persists, "yet without considering either the

[76] WCT, p. 157/162.
[77] "On the Essence of Truth", p. 145.

ground for taking up standards or the essence of what gives the standard."[78] In truth thinking does not set the standard, but is, more properly thought, itself always standard setting.

Inasmuch as we ask the question, as we are attempting to do, we find ourselves asked by it, and become involved with it, bound up in it, and discover our essential inclusion within what is being asked. The inner call to thinking sounded in the question is addressed unmistakeably, and incessantly to the being who asks the question, and who is thus placed within, or found in a place within, the question. As Heidegger remarks, "We ourselves are, in the strict sense of the word, put in question by the question."[79] We are called out to thinking by the call which calls out for thought. By asking for what it is that precedes and makes possible, and also engenders, thinking, *the question asks essentially for what it is that precedes and makes possible its very being-asked*, which is a question that necessarily concerns the being for whom it is possible to ask questions, and this question specifically. Uniquely, *this question asks after its own origin.* But as the locus and medium of questioning, it places us in question. It accomplishes this necessarily, for as the question is asked, the asking asks after its own origin, it questions the source from which the questioning arose. The asker, as it were, indispensable to any asking, is implicated essentially in the question, in the very fabric of the question, and this places us in question fundamentally. It means,

[78] "On the Essence of Truth", p. 146.
[79] WCT, p. 116.

insofar as we are essentially involved with language, speaking, and thinking – which includes questioning – we must ask after and question our own origin and genesis. Within the question, What is called thinking?, if asked with proper care, we must be seen to be already entangled, to be in the very thinking evoked, called for, and asked after by the question. It also, thus, and in the same stroke, places in question our very way of disclosing the world, and that means it renders our essence questionable. We do, in a sense, come to discover, or find ourselves already in the question, both already questioning and questionable. It is as though out of this question, and its putting us in question, we first find ourselves to be thinking beings, because questioning beings, because we ask questions, speak. Our very question, then, in being asked at all, itself awakens the questioner to thinking, through questioning, if even only in a very preliminary way, or as a possibility [*Möglichkeit*] pertaining to the questioner's essence. Our being involved with the question, and the question's involving us in what it asks, as essential possibilities, are together themselves the presupposition in the heart of which we find ourselves.

What calls forth thinking concerns us essentially. We come to be gripped by the question "what is called thinking?" when we turn to it thoughtfully, because it has always already turned essentially to grip us, it is by its very nature directed to us, addressed to us – we who ask the question, and through whom it is asked. For "In truth, the calling [*das Rufen*] stems from the place to which the

call goes out. In the calling reigns an originary outreach toward. Only thereby can the call demand [*Im Rufen waltet ein ursprünglishes Auslangen nach... Nur deshalb kann der Ruf Verlangen*]."[80] In speaking to us directly the call has an orientation, it targets us, rather than indifferently broadcasting a cry. If, in turning essentially to us, the question which accomplishes a call into thinking reaches and really does summon us into thought, to think, then it has accomplished, thereby, a freeing of ourselves for our essence as thinkers, a summoning of us to what is most our own. For the demand to think is not a limiting requirement, is not "a constraining force. The call sets our essence free, so decisively that only what calls us to thinking first of all grants the freedom of the free in which free humans can dwell. The inceptive essence of freedom conceals itself in the call which gives to mortals what is most-to-be-thought [*kein Zwang. Das Geheiß bringt unser Wesen ins Freie und dies so entschieden, daß Jenes, was uns in das Denken ruft, allerest Freiheit des Freien gibt, damit menschlich Freies darin wohnen kann. Das anfängliche Wesen der Freiheit verbirgt sich im Geheiß, das den Sterblichen das Bedenklichste zu denken gibt*]."[81] It brings us into what is most properly our own, for, in Heidegger's words, "we are capable only of that which we want. But we want, again, only that which for its part truly wants us ourselves in our essence, while appealing to our essence as what holds us in our essence. To keep actually means to protect, in the way a pasture allows pasturing. What

[80] WCT, p. 124/129. (Translation altered).
[81] WCT, p. 132-33/137.

holds us in our essential nature keeps us only so long, however, as we for our part keep holding what holds us [*Denn wir vermögen nur das, was wir mögen. Aber wir mögen wiederum wahrhaft nur Jenes, was seinerseits uns selber und zwar uns in unserem Wesen mag, indem es sich unserem Wesen als das zuspricht, was uns im Wesen hält. Halten heißt eigentlich hüten, auf dem Weideland weiden lassen. Was uns in unserem Wesen hält, hält uns jedoch nur solange, als wir selber von uns her das Haltende be-halten*]."[82] A mutual wanting, thus, must obtain between what wants to be thought, and thinking. Thinking, in this case, is doubly contingent upon something other than itself to be essentially itself. To be capable of thinking, we must want to think. Capability is thus firstly a function of wanting, or liking, of finding appealing. However, *wanting is not the same as willing*. Our wanting is not something we bring about for ourselves. We are *dependent* on something else for our wanting, we receive it from something other than ourselves. We are not free to choose what we want, we are chosen for wants by something other which wants us, which speaks [*spricht*] to us, which appeals [*anspricht*] to us. Our freedom is granted not in the selection of wants, but in capability bestowed through finding appealing [*ansprechend*] what appeals to us. A mutual wanting obtains (possibly) between, on the one hand, what calls for thinking, i.e., what wants to be thought, and, on the other, the thinking so called forth. Should thinking respond essentially, that is, properly to the call, an

[82] WCT, p. 3/5. (Translation altered).

essential correspondence [*Entsprechung*] obtains between what appealed to be thought and thinking's letting that call be the appeal for thinking that it is, by letting it be appealing. This 'letting-be' is what Heidegger has established to be essential freedom. He says, freedom, or "To let be is ...: Leaving that which is present its presencing [*Anwesen*], and not importing anything else into it in addition."[83] Our freedom is *freedom as response*, not the freedom to respond. For "The human being does not 'possess' freedom as a property. At best, the converse holds: freedom ... possess the human being."[84] We are set free to respond to the injunction of the appeal, however, only because the inception of freedom and what it frees are essentially the same. If through this mutual wanting we are enabled to think it is because we are freed in response to what calls for thinking in a way which is essential, or fails to be essential.[85] In being freed we are, in turn, let be as the beings that we are, namely, thinking beings capable of response to what calls for thinking. Again, our being kept/keeping ourselves such that we *are* essentially is contingent both upon what-calls-forth-thinking's essentially speaking to us, and upon our fulfilling our part, as it were, and keeping hold of what holds us; that is, the situation in which there is a mutual holding (already, as the source in which we always already are) becomes authentically

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[83] "On the Essence of Truth", §4, fn. To first edition 1943, p. 144.
[84] "On the Essence of Truth", p. 145.
[85] See "Letter on Humanism." Where *das Vermögen* is translated as "the enabling." Shortly thereafter we find Heidegger declare, in a way that is consistent with our passage above, that "favouring [*Mögen*] is the proper essence of enabling [*Vermögen*], which not only can achieve this or that but also can let something essentially unfold in its provenance, that is, let it be."

[*eigentlich*] a keeping, protecting [*hüten*], in the authentically thoughtful response to what wants to be thought about – the holding to which we are beholden. Thinking remains a possibility [*Möglichkeit*] for us, that is, because what calls for thinking favours [*mögen*] us, it enables [*Vermögen*] thinking, making it possible [*möglich*], meaning that thinking now 'may be', it is may-ly, to transliterate.[86] This suggests concretely that there is a way to fail to think, to fall short of our own essence, in that thinking may not be, and with that non-essencing is as much a primordial possibility.

[86] "Letter on Humanism," p. 242.

§4. The Provocation of Thought, and the Originary Un-thought

What is most thought-provoking, however, is not the object of thought, or interest, not something which thinking thinks about, ponders, has in view and works over in thought. Heidegger tells us that any "thought-provoking matter already *is* what must be thought about [*das Bedenkliche von sich her schon das zu-Bedenkende* ist]."[87] And he continues, apprising us that "From now on we will call 'most thought-provoking' what remains to be thought about always, because it is at the beginning, before all else [*Wir nennen jetzt und in der Folge dasjenige, was stets, weil einsther und allem voraus, zu bedenken bleibt: das Bedenklichste*]."[88] We have here a characterisation of what is essentially most thought-provoking, yet it is a characterisation which does not identify just *what* it is that is most thought-provoking.

However, the language is more revealing upon closer reading. The German word for 'what is to be thought about' is *das zu-Bedenkende*, and it properly belongs to what is thought-provoking. Essential to what prompts thinking is its character intrinsically to be what is to be thought about, and that inasmuch as it provokes thought of itself, i.e., innately demands to be thought about. What exhibits this character is *das Bedenklich* (literally, 'the thoughtly').

[87] WCT, p. 4/6.
[88] WCT, p. 4/6.

In common German parlance this term typically appears in an adjectival form (*bedenklich)* and signals the element of doubt, of dubiousness, which inheres to what it describes. Moreover, this same adjective can ordinarily also be employed to convey a sense of seriousness and gravitas. Heidegger's intention, by invoking this word to name, to give a sense of, what is essential in what-is-to-be-thought-about (*das zu-Bedenkende*) is to suggest the way in which thinking (*Denken*) is already at the root of this issue. We can thus explicate this term to hear in it the full resonance intended by Heidegger. What is doubtful (*bedenklich*) is what incites thinking, gives itself over to thinking, but in an elusive, indeterminate manner. What is doubtful refuses to surrender itself to the certainty of knowledge, refuses domestication, disambiguation. It is doubtful precisely because its 'truth' remains in doubt, remains questionable and indeterminate one way or another. On the other hand, however, it remains of grave importance and keeps a relation to thinking, keeps it preoccupied. In other words, something which is really questionable, of itself (*von sich her*) in question, cannot be ignored or disregarded, is not something from which thinking can detach itself, but in its very questionability is something which demands to be taken seriously. It is precisely because the questionable confers thinking to what is in question, and conducts thought to its subject matter, as signalled in the very construction of the word which contains the prefix 'be-', a prefix which endows what follows with the suffix-character – precisely this very word, selected by Heidegger, reveals that

what is *bedenklich* is, beyond simply questionable in a weak sense, also always worthy of question (*fragwürdig*), question-worthy. What is *bedenklich*, i.e., *das Bedenklich*, is what of itself calls out for thought, is what, to put it another way, draws thought to itself.[89]

The text, as we read, continues in its discussion of the thought-ly, and the word promptly receives the superlative suffix, becoming *das Bedenklichste*, when consideration turns to its limit, understood as most thought-provoking, maximally thoughtly, or thought-li-est, to transliterate once again. Most thought-ly, as we might awkwardly, but faithfully, articulate it, understood to exhibit this adverbial sense, is not a thing, it does not satisfy a what-type question, for it is not a matter of essential what-ness (quidditas, *Washeit*); rather, the word connotes a sense of activity, a sense of *being*-the-demand-for-thought-of-itself, or, perhaps, its way of being *is* thought-ly. To retrieve the shift in essence made earlier, it is essentially the ground of enabling the possibility of thinking. So, to extend our previous understanding accordingly, *das Bedenklichste* is not, strictly speaking, *what* draws thought to itself, but the drawing-in of thought to itself. In this way, the complex circumstance of mutual wanting and enabling of thinking is grounded by the demand for thinking which the most thoughtly issues of itself.

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[89] This way of thinking/saying it parallels the way we in English say, and think, 'one draws attention to oneself.' We simply do not make the linguistic leap and affirm one, thereby, to *be* attention-ly.

The first aspect mentioned in the above passage characterising what is most thought-ly is that it *remains to be thought about always*. In one respect, it is *always* futurally deferred, both offering itself as what is yet un-thought, and at once that which obligates thinking of itself to think it, thus holding thinking vitally rapt without surcease. But Heidegger's characterisation is marked with amphibology. In another respect, *remaining* to be thought, it also carries with it a past, a sense that it already *has been* something to be thought, and continues to exist that way; i.e., it already had or carries the status of needing to be thought, and that that status lingers still, carried over from an indeterminate past. Something does not *remain* in its place, were it not already there to begin with. Still further, in *remaining always*, it betrays a pastness which is also endlessly deferred into a future. *Das Bedelichste* is, at the limit, because at the limit, the very un-thought as such, the still to be thought, which demands to be thought, which intrinsically issues the imperative that it be thought, but which, for all that, always is of the character to-be-thought.

What is most provocative of thought is never itself what is thought. Constituted by the feature of continuous deferral, it manifests the quality of refusing itself to thought, it manifests itself by refusing admission to thought. The essential way of being of that which is most evocative of thought, which is most thoughtly, *das Bedenklichste* is itself, curiously, un-thought-ly. In being always and already un-thought, ever on the hither side of thought, enticing thought, it is

the very drawing which prevails in all drawing-in of thought.[90] What is always yet to be thought, the un-thought which ever demands to be thought as such, which incessantly calls upon thought, summons thought to direct attention its way, is most thought-provoking inasmuch as it is the very obligation to think itself, and it thus does not admit the possibility of succumbing to being thought, of being resolved into thought, or knowledge, or having already been thought through. *One cannot dispose of the obligation to think by thinking*; rather, thinking can only remain always obligated to the essentially un-thought, and thus remain actively proceeding as thinking.

In the second place, Heidegger says that what is most thought-provoking bears the first characteristics *because* it is at the beginning, *before all else*. This second moment, the absolute priority of the provocation, cannot, then, simply be an addition, but must, as signalled by the conjunction 'because', serve to explain and deepen our understanding of what most originarily summons thought in general, and thus situate the first aspect of being always-to-be-thought in its light. This it accomplishes by highlighting further the ambiguity discussed in the preceding few paragraphs. The explanatory power and situating activity of the

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[90] To anticipate, a case will be made here for the un-thought, which is the provocation of thought, being what articulates the opening up of the future as such, by being always already what is always to-be-thought. That is, what calls for thinking, and determines thinking as the essential possibility for thinking, secures the futurity of the future by holding it open as a space in which possibility is itself possible, by providing a phenomenon which is essentially always futural, and pertains to the essence of thinking, that is, secures a future which is never present but always holding itself open to/for the present, presence, as the possibility of modes of presencing.

because, in this case, is not expressed by annulling the ambiguity and suspense in the first characteristic Heidegger provides of what evokes thinking. On the contrary, that force of explanation derives from drawing our attention explicitly to the peculiar and seemingly paradoxical nature of the origin of thinking, "paradoxical only for ordinary *doxa* (opinion)."[91]

Most deeply provocative of thought is what is most originarily located, what is deeply prior, at the origin, before all else [*allem voraus* – from before everything]. "The beginning of Western thought is not the same as its origin. The beginning is, rather, the veil that conceals the origin – indeed an unavoidable veil .... The origin keeps itself concealed in the beginning."[92] Since it is not a thing, not some thing fixed which stands before thought, or crassly stood at that historical moment when thinking started,[93] in a way which could now retrospectively be dis-covered as it is/was, but is rather the originating elicitation of thought, understood (ad)verbally, then most thought-provoking is something eventful: the event of thought's provoked entry into being, the prompted arousal of thinking, or more accurately, the emerging of thinking in/out of relation to its own provocation. Situated before all else, the most thought-ly is prior to all actual thought, and functions as what first stirs thought to activity, as what calls thinking

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[91] "On the Essence of Truth", §6, p. 149.
[92] WCT, p. 153.
[93] So, the "start" of thinking, that is, the beginning of Western metaphysics is inaugurated by the withdrawal of what is to be thought. Thus, the beginning is founded by the origin (withdrawal), and in the retreat of its origin the beginning is unveiled.

forth (from…?). From this discussion it should be clear already that thinking is not a self-sufficient activity, and is not responsible for its own birth. The provocation of thought precedes and first permits thought, and the thinking to which this dynamic gives rise. It must be emphasised that this originary rising is, not the precedence of a priority-posteriority distinction, but the priority which precedes such distinctions, the source of thinking itself, deeply prior, always already prior. This shift to an entirely different modal and temporal order, signalled by the move to origination, is what is to be thought in the synechdochal. Synechdochal thinking is originary thinking. Parametres such as priority-posteriority can be set only within the open of a particular field of presence, or particular modification of presencing, a mode into which presencing opens. The presencing of the originary will thus be shown to cut across any presence in which priority-posteriority could hold. Accordingly, nor was the provocation a once upon a time event, which occurred and left thought to itself – the deistic call to thought, which would entail the reification of the provocation, mistaking *das Bedenklichste* for a thing, and returning a corrupted Heidegger to the tradition of ontotheology from which his thinking marks a departure. The priority of the calling forth of thought is the priority which retains its priority, which remains always prior, and thus never becomes thematically related to thinking (never something intended by thinking as a determinate something), never stands in front of its gaze symmetrically, in the present, over and against the intentional

comportment of thought as does an entity – *what is most thought-provoking can never be an object* [Gegen-stand] *for thinking*. Most thought-provoking can never actually be thought, never fall within the ambit of thought, for what first and always lies behind (ahead of) the wakefulness of thinking is an unthought per se. *Das Bedenklichste* is what *is* already happened insofar as there is [*es gibt*] thought. It gives us to think by being a past convocation to thought which is never present to thinking, which never presents itself to thought, but first permits the possibility of the presencing of thinking at all. As already, before all else, at the origin, it precedes thought, but incessantly so, always prior to the thinking which it originates, and it thus precedes thought as a primordially un-thought. For it must be understood that the "calling is not a call that has gone by, but one that has gone out and as such is still calling and inviting; it calls even if it makes no sound."[94] What is most thought-provoking is what is always already un-thought-ly *because* it is always already un-thought-ly.

That what is unthoughtly is, paradoxically, *das Bedenklichste*, most thoughtly, is further corroborated by Heidegger's critical assertion made at the very beginning of the lecture course which states: "*Most thought-provoking is that we are still not thinking* [*Das Bedenklichste ist, daß wir noch nicht denken;* immer noch nicht]."[95] In the English translation the sentence continues parenthetically with the words "- not even yet", which seems to connote the idea that, despite our

[94] WCT, p. 124.
[95] WCT, p. 4/6.

surprise at not thinking now, it is still just a matter of time (linear, physical time) before we begin thinking. The German text, on the other hand, says, '*immer noch nicht*', which means literally, "always still not, or always not yet", and rings more harmoniously with the interpretation we have unfolded this far. In this case, the text says that what most deeply calls upon thinking to be thought about is that we are always still not thinking. The unthoughtly, unthinking, is always already that towards which thought must direct itself as what is inherently, incessantly, and ever demanding to-be-thought, because it is that which always already precedes and makes possible thought in general. In this claim *das Bedenklichste* is explicitly brought into relief as the fact that we are always in some way not thinking. The space opened for thinking to happen, the gap in which there is thinking, *is* only inasmuch as thinking presupposes unthinking – whether tacitly, mutely, or not.

We might be tempted to suspicion that we have begun to deviate and digress widely from our guiding question, *Was heißt denken?* However, we have remained with the question. What calls for(th) thinking, what enjoins us in our nature, and summons us essentially to thought, is what most primordially provokes thinking, what most originarily demands to be thought: *das Bedenklichste*. This, we determined, is the un-thought-ly as such. In calling forth thinking, the un-thought-ly "directs us into thought, and gives directions for

thinking [*das uns in das Denken verweist und dazu anweist*]."[96] As most thought-provoking, it is not only that which provokes thought, calls it forth into the abode where thinking dwells[97] and is liberated to itself, it is also that which intrinsically most demands to be thought. *Das Bedenklichste* first directs us into the space where thinking thinks, it opens the space by denying itself, by its withdrawal, and first enjoins us essentially to think. Moreover, but in the same movement, it directs our thinking essentially, that is, orients it. What calls for thinking, and directs us into thought, also orients us by its very call towards what must be thought, it thereby gives thinking its fundamental compass direction toward the unthought, and that means it also provides us with the direction thinking calls for. Thinking is called by what it is for, "because the source of the calling wants to be thought about by its very nature."[98] Thus, the third and fourth ways of asking *Was Heißt Denken?* must be asked, again, inseverably, yet not with equiprimordiality. Here, as throughout, the fourth version proves to be more original, drawing the third version along with it necessarily. What first calls for thinking, the un-thought-ly, *is* what thinking calls for.

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[96] WCT, p. 115/119. It should be added that in the German text the root verb, *weisen*, which resonates in both the verbs *verweisen* (to refer) and *anweisen* (to instruct, to order) in this sentence, carries with it the sense of pointing, or pointing out, and of showing something, or drawing something to one's attention. So in reading this sentence we should hear how in being referred to thinking and instructed towards it, we have been pointed in the right direction, so to speak, and *das Bedenkichste* has also pointed to (*an-weisen*) thinking itself in the same movement. We become oriented towards what most calls for thought, by what most calls for thought. It gives itself to us as what most calls for thought.

[97] "Calling offers an abode." WCT, p. 124.

[98] WCT, p. 125.

§5. Andenken: Thinking-toward/Thinking-back

In German, a thinking which is directed is given the more descriptively specific term *andenken*. Composed of the prefix 'an-' which confers directionality and pointedness on the root verb 'denken', it can be understood both as simply thinking-towards, and also as a thinking-back. In usual German parlance the word is found most frequently in its nominal form, *die Andenken*, meaning remembrance, souvenir, memorial, or recollection. In our case, *both senses of the directionality of thinking must be held together*, that is to say, both its directions, since what is always to-be-thought, towards which thinking is directed, is, and is opened up to thinking by, the always already prior event of being called into thought, which thinking is given the task of recalling. Thinking is intrinsically oriented to the unthought, which itself flanks and surrounds thinking. *Das Bedenklichste* encircles, enfolds, and thereby delimits the space of thought, the sense of thinking-on.[99] What calls for thinking calls for thinking to

[99] The term thinking-on is a transliteration of Heidegger's verb *andenken*, and refers specifically to the activity of thinking, with the rich meaning which this paper will try to bring-out. Such a construction is not wholly alien to our English language, and we may want to call to mind such terms as 'moving-on', 'getting-on', or 'going-on', and the circumstances surrounding their use. Particularly helpful might be to think of how following a traumatic event we say someone is moving-on. What is critical in saying this, whatever particulars might also be implied, is the sense of continuation, movement, and being freely oriented to the future, while recognising in that movement the essential place of a past. Continuation, free direction (sense, like the archaic meaning of the sense of a river), flowing onward towards, flowing out of a source, these notions must be heard in the term thinking-on, as they are all carried by the simple term moving-on, too.

orient itself towards what must always be thought, the un-thought-ly, which means, it calls for thinking to recall its own originary solicitation, its own originary arising, and with it, its finite delimitation. Thinking is thus essentially concerned with what is prior, and consequently with priority in general understood critically and principally as a concern for the originary. This should have obvious implications for all derivative forms of thinking.

To think-towards what is to-be-thought, as that which is the thought-ly provocation which calls forth and engenders thinking, and must then be what is thought-back on, re-collected, re-called – to think-towards in this way is to hold open, comport oneself to, and involve oneself essentially with the very question which essentially makes an appeal to our essence: *Was heißt denken?* Indeed, "We are capable of thinking only if we try first of all to develop the question 'what is called thinking?' in its fourfold sense, and in the light of the decisive fourth question."[100] This is the situation of which Heidegger offers a succinct account in an untranslated essay by the same title, when he comments: "The thoughtly is that which gives to think. As a result, it appeals to us, from out of itself, to turn ourselves to it, namely (in/by) thinking [*Das Bedenkliche ist das, was zu denken gibt. Von sich her spricht es uns daraufhin an, daß wir uns ihm zuwenden, und zwar denken*].[101] But, as we have remarked above, the un-thought-ly, what is maximally thoughtly, *das Bedenklichste*, is always to-be-thought, is

[100] WCT, p. 231.
[101] "Was Heisst Denken?" p. 6. My translation.

always already so. In other words, "the question is prior even to thinking"[102] itself, in all time(s). Thinking proceeds only on the basis of responding to what is questionable, only out of that source which asks to be thought. *Only out of the sustaining source of questioning is thinking operative as a responsorial involvement in questioning.* This is why Heidegger famously avers: "Questioning is the piety of thinking."[103] It, what is in question, what the question is after, never really presents itself to thought, never consigns itself to the present, to the world of the actual, and to the thematising gaze of intentionality; the provocateur of thinking never shows itself to us face-to-face, as it were. Nevertheless, what is literally inconceivable, not able to be grasped by any act of cerebration, provides thinking with its directionality, its active orientation, the orientation of its activity, and therewith accords thinking its task, by being both its origin and its end. Although at its limit – and we are really concerned with just such limit – *das Bedenkliche* refuses presentation, and *a fortiori* representation, by its very nature as withdrawal, it does not thereby deny itself presence. Despite the fact that we cannot take hold of and form a fixed idea ("The word 'idea' comes from the Greek εἴδοω which means to see, face, meet, be face-to-face"[104]) of *das*

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[102] WCT, p. 160.

[103] Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (Trans. William Lovitt). New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977. P. 35.

[104] WCT, p. 41. Thus, in this sense, what does not show its face is that about which we cannot form an adequate idea, as a determinate representation or concept. It would also be that which frustrates the thematic disclosure of phenomenological intentionality, frustrates any acts of constituting subjectivity. In this minimal sense we can see that Levinas, and later Derrida, mean

Bedenklichste, we are not untouched by it, not unacquainted with it. Clearly, though it may exceed our conceptual grasp, and thus our potential to know [*zu wissen*] what is most *bedenkliche*, through the asking of the question *Was Heißt Denken?*, it has nonetheless taken a hold and gripped us, such that we must affirm that we do, in some sense, know [*wir kennen, oder erkennen*] what calls for thinking after all, or perhaps, before all.[105] Consequently, "Thinking, then, is not a grasping, neither the grasp of what lies before us, nor an attack upon it .... Thinking is not grasping or prehending. In the high youth of its unfolding essence, thinking knows nothing of the grasping concept (*Begriff*)."[106] *Das Bedenkliche* presences itself in the form of a question, through the question, and not in the proposition. It reaches into thinking out of and as the question, it "touches [us] in the surely mysterious way of escaping [us] by its withdrawal [*angeht (uns) in der gewiß rätselhaften Weise, daß es (uns) entgeht, indem es sich (uns) entzieht*]."[107] Through questioning, through this specific question above all,

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something similar, but invoke the term 'face' as precisely what cannot be epistemologically or phenomenologically domesticated. It is interesting to recall in this light how in Exodus God refuses to show Moses His face, declaring that one could not behold God's face and live. Levinas and Derrida are not simply inverting the traditional meaning of 'face', but in challenging the gate-keeper status of consciousness they displace (rather than replace, or even subordinate) the primacy of ontological considerations. Unlike Heidegger's most unthoughtly, which is provocative because its way of presencing is other than to be present, the face in Levinas and Derrida, made in the image of God, disfigures presence because otherwise than presencing, *tout court*. For them it is not a matter of presencing, but otherwise than presence, whereas for Heidegger it is a matter of presencing otherwise.

[105] The verb is further related to the words *können*, and also *ken* in Scots, as Prof. Burch has pointed out.

[106] WCT, p. 211.

[107] WCT, p. 9/11.

what cannot present itself or be thought can, at the limit, insinuate itself into thinking, can leave its trace [*Spur*] to think.

However, admittedly we are getting ahead of ourselves here, and will have to return to the issue of presencing without being present in the form of a question, and knowing without knowing, and the vertiginous heights above actuality, presently.

For the moment, we return to our Janis-faced thinking. Suspended in the space of reflexivity opened by its source and self-displacing reflection on that source, which refuses to present itself to a thinking which constitutes, and occurs within that space, thinking cannot be understood in any other way than verbally. Thinking must be savvied as an activity constituted only by its own unfolding, yet not thereby self-constituted. It must be understood only inasmuch as in its motility it undertakes to think-back and think-towards the un-thought-ly, which inherently escapes its grasp, but which, as a call to thinking, first sets thinking apace. It is not accidental that, as Heidegger tells us in the lecture series, etymologically, "In the widest sense, 'to call' means to set in motion, to get something underway [*Heißen besagt im weiten Sinne: in Fahrt, auf den Weg bringen*]."[108] For this reason, thinking, in being directed to that which never really presents itself, but which spurs thinking on by being beyond it, beyond its reach, demanding intrinsically to be pursued by an ever frustrated thought

[108] WCT, p. 117/120.

(frustrated metaphysically if its 'goal' is to reach what withdraws) – thinking thus operates as an indication of that which is in withdrawal from it, but which, in and by its very withdrawing, draws thinking along in its direction. In being oriented towards that which actively withdraws from thinking, from what "refuses arrival", which refuses to show itself directly to thought, thinking-toward, *andenken* constitutes "a sign ... [that] points toward what draws *away*, it points, not so much at what draws away as into the withdrawal [*ein Zeichen ... (das) in das Sich*entz*iehende zeigt, deutet es nicht so sehr auf das, was sich da ent-zieht, als vielmehr in das Sichentziehen*]."[109] 'Into' because the withdrawal is an event permeating the essence of thinking's origination, to which thinking is drawn, and drawn into its own activity by. What withdraws is not an autonomous, independent thing, nor is withdrawal and isolated event, such as a state of affairs, to which the synchrony of presence could be attributed. Quite otherwise, withdrawal, absencing, the movement in the essence of originary thinking which diachronises thinking, and disrupts the metaphysical will to grasp timeless truths securing constant presence. It is what is denied, refused to and by metaphysics, namely, the temporality of origination, presencing and absencing. So, withdrawal is not something that either stands immobile to be stared or pointed at, nor does it advance itself towards thinking, on its way to the great and final *rendezvous* of thinking and being, where each becomes mutually transparent to the other. It is

[109] WCT, pp. 9-10/11.

by its very nature in perpetual recession, ceaseless departure, and is, then, precisely what escapes unambiguous transparency, and frustrates attempted conceptualisation, attempts to know it, or make it present. Only in response to hearing this movement of absenting is thinking properly brought to what is most worthy of questioning. By the same token, only here is there incessant presencing, and movement into fields of presence. At its outer reaches thinking is animated by the undertow of absence. For "what really must be thought keeps itself turned away from man since the beginning"[110] and involves us just as oiginarily. Thinking thinks itself into (and in this way also out of) the withdrawal, which does not thereby cease to withdraw from thinking. On the contrary, in its perpetual withdrawal, in its active turning away it announces itself *as* withdrawal, and leaves with thinking the trace of, or a taste for what cannot be thought.

Thinking has this enigmatic property,
that it itself is brought to its own light.
-*What is Called Thinking?* p. 28

The Possibility of Thinking Towards Itself: sameness and difference:

There is an essentiality to the turning away, to the withdrawal of what must be thought. It is precisely because it is neither an accident, an

[110] WCT, p. 7/8.

historiographically pin-pointable episode,[111] nor a human failure to think or capture what withdraws[112] – like some ontological fugitive which has still managed to elude the searchlight of reason – that what is at an insurmountable remove is essential. It is not on the lam from a thinking with an arrest warrant in hand. There is no arresting point, and no rest for thinking. Quite to the contrary, what Heidegger says is that "what really must be thought keeps itself turned away since the beginning [*das eigentlich zu-Denkende hält sich von einsther in solcher Abwendung*]."[113] This is a curious construction, and the grammar, seemingly an editorial oversight, must cause us to stumble lightly and pause for reconsideration in our reading. Heidegger does not say that what withdraws 'has kept itself turned away since the beginning', as we might expect to read, nor even simply that it 'keeps itself turned away.' Importantly, the phrasing informs the present (keeps itself) of the past it always, and already has (since the beginning). We are meant to understand, in other words, that this beginning, unlike the first in a concatenation, is a beginning that never began, that never was in the present. Neither, consequently, was there ever a present before this beginning. This unique beginning is the very beginning of, the very beginning which inaugurates the present as such: presentness, presence. It is a beginning which is always

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[111] Cf. WCT, p. 7: "that which really gives us food for thought did not turn away from man at some time or other which can be fixed in history."
[112] Cf. WCT, p. 7: "that we are still not thinking is by no means only because man does not yet turn sufficiently toward that which, by origin and innately, wants to be thought about...."
[113] WCT, p. 7/8.

since the beginning, and as such never concurrent, never symmetrically present with us – it is an irretrievable origin, an event in and from a past that never was a present. As a deep origin of presence, it is most originary, it is the well-spring from which presences arise and recede.

The unthought as such is what first inspires thinking, first provokes thinking to life. Out of the acquaintance with what cannot be thought, thinking is first induced. To put it more playfully, but no less accurately, the most fundamental facet of thinking is not that it conceives, but that it is conceived. It is what exceeds comprehension that calls thinking forth, and as that beckoning call it provides thinking direction.

To continue sorting through this problematic, attention to the "un-" of "un-thought" as we are understanding it, must first be paid. More specifically, "un-" must be distinguished from "not" (as in the cases of contraries: wet is not-dry and dry is not-wet). Heidegger would not understand "un-thought" as the contrary of thought, anymore than unhiddenness, or unconcealment are taken to be the mere contraries to hiddenness or concealment. Nor would he understand it as the lack or privation of thought which can be overcome and dispelled by an appropriate application of thought. The 'un-' is not a demon to be exorcised from thought. In other words, the "un-" of "un-thought," on this interpretation, does not signal that "thought" is an autonomous and fixed term from which "un-thought" stands distinguished and/or opposed, nor vice versa. For Heidegger, un-thoughtliness, as

it were, properly belongs to the very essence of what is called thinking, as already maintained, as counter-essential in what most calls for thought, that is, it belongs to the essencing of thought, or thinking, by virtue of its fundamental and inseverable involvement in what is called thinking. The un-thoughtly 'parallels' (if they must even be held apart) the *Unwesen* so essential to the essence of truth. It would be equally appropriate here to reword Heideggger to say: "Errancy is the essential counteressence to the originary essence of [thinking]."[114]

What always remains to be thought, the unthoughtly, is the most enabling of thought, the most evocative. This means that what is most thought-provoking is not this or that particular thing, or fact, or concept, etc.; rather, most thought-provoking is the very issue of our still not thinking. Thinking is most properly understood in relation to its unthoughtly essence, or better, in its relating always to its unthoughtly essence.

A few elements have been brought together, and yet the claim is that they are different, though not autonomously distinct terms, that they do indeed belong together essentially in what is called thinking, that is, they are in some sense the same. Somehow we need to understand how thinking can come to think its own essence, especially given that its essence is its very still not thinking, its unthinking, its not completely being its own totality. We must try to understand

[114] "On the Essence of Truth", p. 150, where originally "thinking" read "truth".

how what is called thinking involves the difference between the matter of thinking [*die Sache*] and the thinking of the matter, the process of thinking itself.

If thinking is to think its own essence, there must be a difference between thinking and what is thought about, that is to say, between thinking and its own arising, and yet they must also betray a sameness. We are thus pressed by the question, What is called thinking?, to think difference without absolving it in identity, if thinking to be able to proceed as a response to a call which it does not issue of itself, but which demands a calling of itself into question. For Heidegger, conceiving sameness as identity leaves only ever an empty samness, a tautological identity wherein all difference is at bottom essentially no difference at all. "The equal or identical always moves toward the absence of difference."[115] Self-thinking thought, as the pinnacle of metaphysical achievement, would amount to banishing all questionability in the attainment of thought's complete self-possession. Where what is the same [*das Gleich*] is conceived as identical all correspondence [*Angleichung*] corresponds only with itself. Without the space offered in difference, the space provided by difference; without that in-between, or remove, there is no room in which to question, no room in which thinking can move as responsive.

This completion of thought, this metaphysical model of thinking's task to answer all questions is subverted by Heidegger's understanding of what it means

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[115] "... Poetically Man Dwells ..." in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Trans. Albert Hofstadter). New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1971. P. 218.

to be the same (*das Selbe*). In his essay, "The Principle of Identity", based on his last seminar before retirement, Heidegger draws our attention to how the sameness prevailing between thinking and Being, first announced by Parmenides in his famous fragment, and later christened a fundamental principle, has been understood by traditional metaphysics as a principle of Being. Identity, we are told, belongs to Being inasmuch as "[t]o every being as such there belongs identity, the unity with itself [*Zu jedem Seienden als solchem gehört, die Identität, die Einheit mit ihm selbst*].[116] Accordingly, the principle holds "as a law of thought [*als ein Gesetz des Denkens*]"[117] insofar as it is thought's job to get the drop on how Being really is, and to bring itself into accord with this external actuality. This model suggests a correspondence theory of truth coupled with a vision of *ratio* as the proper form of thinking charged with the instrumental task of absolute knowledge. Where metaphysics is queen of the sciences, reason is both the ontological cartographer and her majesty's appointed coloniser of Being, i.e., everything

Heidegger does not simply propose an alternative model which stands either opposed, or indifferently juxtaposed to this metaphysical view. Rather, he looks back to identity itself for his understanding, and discovers that it originarily "says something wholly different from what we know otherwise as the doctrine of

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[116] "Identity and Difference" in *Identity and Difference* (Trans. Joan Stambaugh). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. p. 26. Hereinafter, 'ID.'
[117] ID, p. 26.

metaphysics, which states that identity belongs to being. Parmenides says: Being belongs to an identity ... [*Das Sein gehört in eine Identität*]." Heidegger continues on to clarify what this means, pointing out to us that "long before thinking had arrived at a principle of identity, identity speaks out in a pronouncement which rules as follows: thinking and Being belong together in the Same and by virtue of this Same [*Denken und Sein gehören in das Selbe und aus diesem Selben zusammen*]."[118] So, it is not principally that the way of being of all beings is to be self-same, not that everything is the same as itself, identical or equal with itself. Rather, more fundamentally it is the case that what is not a being, not an actual some thing, is characteristic of identity by belonging in the Same together along with that with which it is identified. And it is identified, conversely, by virtue of also belonging with it together in this Same. Here it becomes critical to try and follow Heidegger and think the relation as more primordial than the relata, than the elements or terms being related. This, again, means the elements are not first self-contained and then brought into a relation of identity by a mediating sublation, still less by a collapsing of one term into the other, or by being unable to discern any difference at all. It means that the two terms must be held together, while also being held apart. Being is characteristic of an identity, and thinking also is characteristic of an identity, both belong together in the same.

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[118] ID, p. 27.

To help make this clearer and more cogent, Heidegger addresses the word "belonging together [*das Zusammengehören*]." In the tradition this is thought of in terms of the together, and thus "the meaning of belonging is determined by the word together, that is by its unity."[119] In contrast, when the belonging is emphasised and given priority, the together cannot overrun the separateness of the two terms by amalgamating them or coalescing them into an empty identicality or union. "In the interpretation of belonging together as *belonging* together we, taking Parmenides' hint, already had in mind thinking as well as Being, and thus what belongs to each other in the Same [*was im Selben zueinandergehört*]."[120] We found earlier that what properly belongs to what provokes thought, to what is to be thought, to the evocation of thinking is the thought-ly. Said another way, to what is itself fundamentally most unthoughtly (*das Bedenklichste* – the evocation of thought, and so prior and not actually thought itself) belongs the thoughtly. And also vice versa: to thinking, to thought belongs essentially that which must be thought, that which enjoins thinking in general. The thoughtly and the unthoughtly essentially belong together, that is, they are both originarily in the same, they both are characteristic of what is called thinking, sharing an originary source, but maintaining their difference. Heidegger puts it summarily elsewhere: "Thought in the sense of what in essence belongs together, the same indeed bursts the indifference of what belongs together, even more it holds them apart in the

[119] ID, p. 29.
[120] ID, p. 30.

most radical dissimilarity. It holds them apart and yet does not allow them to fall away from each other and hence to disintegrate. This holding-together in keeping-apart is a trait of what we call the same and its sameness. This holding [*Halten*] pertains to a 'relation' [*Verhältnis*] that still stands before thinking as what is to be thought."[121]

Given this possibility of thinking difference in sameness without resolving the difference, without transcending the difference in S*elbe* so that it is absolved in absolute thought, further characteristics of thinking become free to emerge and show themselves. It becomes preliminarily clearer that and how thinking is always finite, and that it is always underway. In this light it is not a failure of thought to achieve what it seeks that leaves it still seeking; it is not a miscarriage of thought defeated in its efforts to achieve fulfilment in complete self-possession. Thinking does not derive its identity from its fulfilment, and is not understood out of the attainable, actualisable telos after which it seems to aspire. Thinking, on the contrary, must be seen in terms of its constitution as inexhaustibly seeking itself. Thinking is oriented to/by its essence, by/to what is to be thought. However, the unthought, which enfolds thinking, does so in and through its continual withdrawal from thought, in refusing to concede to having been thought, and yet by that very movement away it issues a thinking. Because the question *Was Heißt Denken?* enjoins thought to think the very retreat which

[121] PR, p. 89-90.

unremittingly provides food for thought, to think its own irrecoverable origination, thinking is fundamentally constituted by its incompleteness, its displacement from provenience, by its reaching (for) its limits. To think its own limits, is to think its own finitude. Again, not as a lack of completeness, a falling short of the goal which could in principle be achieved, but by being essentially *un*grounded because rooted.[122] Thinking is beckoned into an endlessly deferred questioning of its origin.

[122] The leap from the metaphysical to the questioning of the origin of metaphysical thinking is not a matter of still more grounds. It is the leap away from thinking in terms of the demand for the provision of a sufficiency of grounds/reasons. Thus, the rootedness of metaphysical thinking, of self-grounding ground- providing, is something other than metaphysical, so other than a 'ground' in the metaphysical sense, and disrupts the grounds for metaphysics while providing it an originating source [*Ursprung*]. This is why thinking is not groundless [*grundlos*], nor does it find itself fallen into an abyss [*Abgrund*], but is un-grounded, it is sustained by an originating wellspring with undermines its efforts to provide itself with a grounded stability.

§5. The Origin of Thinking and the Thinking of Origin: The Openness of Thinking and Time

A thinking which is constituted by its unceasing attempt to reach out for/into what it essentially cannot conceive, cannot take in and hold on to, cannot arrive at because it is what refuses arrival itself, by its hazarding to think the unthought, is a thinking which is always already in the same movement an un-thinking itself, a placing in question the unquestioned mode of thinking which has been passed on to it, for "we can learn thinking, only if we radically (at the roots) unlearn what thinking has traditionally been [*wir können das Denken nur lernen, wenn wir sein bisheriges Wesen von Grund aus verlernen. Aber dazu ist nötig, daß wir es zugleich kennen lernen*]."[123] It is a process constituted in and through its own undoing. Thinking its own essence is something which can only be un-done, constantly undone, never accomplished in the sense of arriving at a terminus, done completely, finished, without remainder. Thinking's activity is an unhinging and self-dis-locating, not a telic pursuit. In this sense it should be understood that we do not come to learn *what* thinking *is* by thinking, but in this learning we come to think. *Thinking is as learning.* It is not a learning what (by doing) but learning to (by doing). What has always already withdrawn from

[123] WCT, p. 8/10. More literally, the German says we must unlearn, or forget, the current way of thinking from out of ground/reason, and that this unlearning equally requires that we in addition get to know that thinking we are putting in question.

thinking, is what provokes thinking, because it disrupts the repose of a thinking unquestioningly content with its mode of advance and operation, giving it to what remains always to be thought about – it is both the essence of and essential matter for thinking to reflexively unhinge itself. Withdrawal is what puts thought in motion, and gets it underway by making undermining the availability of the conditions under which thinking can, in any originary way, preserve itself as the unconditioned ground of all grounds. As that which thinking is ultimately given the task to think, it draws thinking into itself endlessly. Thinking, in its active directionality as *andenken*, is itself, then, always indicative, ever pointing into the withdrawal both ahead of itself, as to-be-thought, and into its anterior source as essential origin.

Origination as What Obliges Thinking Originiarily:

We have seen that it is our very essence which stirs us into the domain of thinking, and gives us and is the task to think. But there are further aspects of this circle than the worldless, that is, abstract way of thinking we have thus far. They concern the nature of being given a task in such an essential way, and further, having the task, the demand to think at all, issued from a source which is also the source of thinking itself, and its proper matter [*Sache*].

In this constellation of elements which constitute as a whole what is called thinking we must constantly keep in mind not only the two elements alone, thought and unthought, but, crucially, we must attend to their relating, and their

roles, that is, we must pay attention to the shaping of this event called thinking, to its dimensionality. Our attention must always be travelling from the unthought as originary provocation to thinking, to thinking's critical task to think the unthought, i.e., through to the unthought as what opens before thinking. We must hold these elements in their relation (or their relating), and we must do so synechdocally, permitting every element to refer to every other and to the whole process at once, without it, however, being reduced or congealed into one fixed whole. In other words, our thinking about thinking must remain as faithfully verbal and dynamic as the subject matter we are trying to think – we must defend against the tendency for thinking to fossilise. To say it otherwise, between originating origin, and origin as the matter of thinking, the world is opened to/for thinking, and thinking is opened to/for the world.

As has already arisen in our discussion, thinking is elicited and directed by that which is essentially a withdrawal. In other words, what precedes thinking essentially, as that to which thinking is a response, always already a response, is by its very nature a beginning for thinking which never began, the origination of thinking. Such an origin is thinking's own past, but a past that was never present, a past for thinking as such. This past character of the origin of thinking is further reflected in thinking being constituted by always already having been given a task, an obligation. Thinking is born already with a past, and it inherits the past by virtue of being enabled at all. This means to say that there is no thinking

which first stands available to be subsequently issued a task. The giving of the task is prior to any thinking, for it is through, and out of having been demanded that thinking first emerges as a possibility. Further still, because freed in heeding the demand, or failing to cor-respond to it, thinking not only emerges as a possibility, as one among others, but more essentially thinking *is* only in relation [*Verhältnis*] to possibility, and that means to futurity as such. Thinking only is as something tasked into existing by this irrecuperable past, a past which, for its own part, articulates itself as such through thinking's essentially having been called out to its possibility. The call to think its origin, from its origin, comes through and as the openness to the future as possibility. The past opens itself to thinking out of the future as possibility of thinking, for a thinking. This circling back of the past out of the future is what Derrida somewhere begins calling the future-anterior.

We previously determined that that obligation to which we are obliged is the obligation to think. But it is an obligation from which we are never absolved. The difference between thought and unthought, between thinking and its essence, was shown to be an irresolvable difference, and this entails that in the dimensional relations of what is called thinking, neither is the task of thinking one from which thinking is ever discharged, relieved, nor one which it can complete. At worst it can fail to respond responsibly to what calls for thinking. With the task endlessly deferred in this way, because perpetually pressing, any 'end' is not only

unreachably removed from thinking, but absent altogether. Thinking does not simply have something it has to get done, even if that end is in principle unattainable; rather, in its essential configuration with relation to an always already to be thought, and an endless obligation to remain obliged to think its own origination, it constitutes itself as fully, and essentially temporal, inescapably bound by/to time, having a past, that is, pastness as such, and also having a future, being futural as such, always oriented to a futurity, precisely due to its being essentially atelic, or goalless.

We could have, in our own thinking, proceeded inversely, attending to the future of thinking first, and thereupon arriving at its past and origin. Indeed, we could even have attended first to the temporality of thinking prior to considering the open space in which thinking is temporal, because it is a temporal space, an open opened by temporality. None of these aspects of thinking can be understood to ground the other, or come first in any linear sequence. It is also vital to keep in mind that the origin (past) and the to-be-thought (future) are, in Heidegger's sense, the same. What is called thinking exists as, and involves, every feature as ineluctably as asking the very question has disclosed them to us.

The task of thinking, in some ways, is what constitutes, what clears the open region which is cleared between irretrievable origin (past) and endless obligation (future). If this is the case, then we must understand the "task of thinking" in both genitive senses. It must be seen to mean that obligation which

belongs, or attaches to thinking to relentlessly renew itself in the active questioning of its origination, i.e., thinking's having a task. However, because that task is the duty to keep on thinking, and, at its limit, to think thinking, it must mean, in addition, that thinking belongs, in turn, to this same task, that thinking is itself issued in the task, beholden to what tasks, and is to be understood in terms of the obligation to which it belongs. Thinking is its own task, and cannot mean anything other than this task. It is the task of thinking to ask, to think what is called thinking?

With this im/ex-plosive nature, we can better understand how thinking *is* that very not yet thinking which has been at issue from the start. As task, the activity of thinking towards withdrawal points into the matter of thinking, points into the withdrawal itself. Thinking is a sign of withdrawal (also in both genitive senses, it points into and belongs to withdrawal). We are essentially that sign, as implicated in what is called thinking, as the locus and medium through which thinking is charged with the task of thinking the unthought, *through which thinking articulates itself.* We find this description of our semiological way of being in Heidegger:

> Insofern der Mensch auf diesem Zug *ist*, *zeigt* er als der so Ziehende in das, was sich entzieht. *Als* der dahin Zeigende *ist* der Mensch der Zeigende. Der Mensch ist hierbei jedoch nicht zunächst Mensch und dann noch außerdem gelegentlich ein Zeigender, sondern: gezogen in das Sichentziehende, auf dem Zug und dieses und somit zeigend in den Entzug, *ist* der Mensch allererst Mensch. Sein Wesen beruht darin, ein solcher

> Zeigender zu sein. Was in sich, seinem Wesen nach, ein Zeigendes ist, nennen wir ein Zeichen. Auf dem Zug in das Sichentziehende ist der Mensch ein Zeichen.
>
> To the extent that man *is* drawing that way, he *points* toward what withdraws. *As* he is pointing that way, man *is* the pointer. Man here is not first of all man, and then also occasionally someone who points. No: drawn into what withdraws, drawing toward it and thus pointing into the withdrawal, man first *is*, man. His essential nature lies in being such a pointer. Something which in itself, by its essential nature, is pointing, we call a sign. As he draws toward what withdraws, man is a sign.[124]

Now, the existence of a sign presupposes space. It presupposes, moreover, an open expanse, not a collection of points. Points cannot themselves point. A sign, on the other hand, by nature indicates away from itself, toward somewhere else. There need not be anything in particular there, but there must at least be a clearing of space, an openness, a there, for a sign to extend itself and index an elsewhere. A sign thus always transcends its place, and simultaneously by its very existence always also is a sign of openness. Where existence inherently involves standing out from itself, ek-sisting, and that means extending out beyond itself into the open, nothing can exist without this space.

But time, as we have shown, is also an originary characteristic of the open, and is thus rightly characterised by Heidegger as ek-static. Space and time belong

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[124]WCT, p. 9/11.

together in/as the open, and there can accordingly be no existence without temporality.

That thinking is a sign makes the dimensionality of thought evident. Thinking always extends through the two poles (di-) of past and future, origin and to-be-thought, thereby signalling and securing the dimension of the present, and that field of arrangement called presence. We should also be clear, at this stage, that we must guard against the tendency to conceive of thinking as a point from which thought extends in two directions, or on which what is external converges and is gathered around. That would be to repeat the centring activity of the modern metaphysical subject. In contrast, as dimensional, as sign, thinking is ek-istent, it is 'differential,' to borrow another term from Derrida.

Time and Thinking: A Productive Circle Opens

The dimensionality of time is by no means exhausted by that of the present. And we shall see how its complex dimensionality, even inadequately explored as in our case, is the clue to the openness and finitude of thinking.

The present, we discovered, is an open region in which thinking actively occurs as thought, where it engages in the thematic disclosure of phenomena, where it lets entities manifest themselves, principially constellate themsleves; it is manifested in and through any and all presentative thinking, and we have

accordingly identified this space as the district of thought.[125] This clearing stretches between and out of past and future, and appropriately, thinking traverses this dimension. Thinking, in other words, is constituted by, and exhibits the same dimensionality as time, so far, which we see evidenced in the way thought reaches a limit at the periphery of this open region delimited by past and future. The past is irretrievable, the future met by thinking as an endless postponement of arrival, the ever-approaching as such, what never itself is presented, but which clears the way for presentation. Extended across the present, and beyond it, transcending it (as the ground of its being opened as such) thinking is a sign pointing into withdrawal, that is, pointing *into* its limits, not just at them, which is to say, thinking reaches into and touches the shadow of the past and future itself, dwelling in halation with the shadow which creeps in and darkens the edges of the open present. This umbrageous border region which marks the outer limits of the open for conceptual thought, concomitantly adumbrates what opens, but is never

[125] It should be noted, again, that it is on the basis of presentative thinking, or thought, that knowledge and knowing are possible. Thus, it would be misleading to object that because we can demonstrate foreknowledge of certain entities or events, and are in possession of various calculi wielding powers of prediction, that not only thought, but also knowledge, exceeds the temporal dimension of the present. In fact, to the contrary, such knowledge only serves to further evidence its being rooted to the present alone, and its unvarying endeavour to fix and root the presence of what is present, to preserve a single mode of presencing. In treating of what has not yet happened, knowledge predicts on a conception of time wherein the future is viewed as simply what is "not yet now". That is to say, "the then as such always refers in each case back to a now, or more precisely, the then is understood on the basis of a now." Thus, predictability is grounded on the exclusive prioritising of the present, and functions, consequently, by reducing the future and the past to a re-presentaion. "A world where everything is regulated in advance," says Levinas, treats the future as though "what is going to pass has in a sense already passed!" It is only on the basis of extending the present out in all directions, and holding time to be a homogeneous measurable continuum of presents, that is, by denying any dimensional reality to the past and the future, denying they are irreducibly different from the present, and denying possibility to presencing.

itself opened – namely, withdrawal, what is un-thought-ly, or the tow of absencing beneath all presencing.

In a "Time and Being", we read the following: "The present — as soon as we have named it by itself, we are already thinking of the past and the future [*Gegenwart – kaum haben wir sie für sich genannt, denken wir auch schon Vergangenheit und Zukunft*]."[126] The present – with it past and future suggest themselves already inseverably to thinking. We are, then, trying to think time out of the light of the present. But the present, as Heidegger has shown repeatedly, is not originarily to be understood as the now, and consequently "time – the unity of present, past and future [*die Zeit – die Einheit von Gegenwart, Vergangenheit und Zukunft*]"[127] is not originarily to be understood in terms of the now moment, as it has been, he contends, since Aristotle. Such a representation conceives the past and the future privatively, and "this lack is named with the 'no longer now' and the 'not yet now.' Viewed in this way time appears as the succession of nows."[128] More fundamentally, however, "the present speaks at the same time of presence [*Aber Gegenwart besagt zugleich Anwesenheit*]."[129] If we are, then, to consider time in the light of the present, we are attempting to step back, first of all, to the light itself, to that presence [*Anwesenheit*] in terms of which all actually present

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[126] Martin Heidegger, "Time and Being," in *On Time and Being* (Trans. Joan Stambaugh). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. p. 10. Hereinafter, 'TB.'
[127] TB, p. 11.
[128] TB, p. 11.
[129] TB, p. 11.

entities [*Anwesende*] present or show themselves, for all "appearance necessarily occurs in some light [*Scheinen geschieht notwendig in einer Helle*]."[130] The light of presence is the ground of synchronicity; it is that which grants to present entities their simultaneity with one another in the present, permits them an ordered appearance – they become phenomena.[131] But there is a further step back which we must take to a vantage which enables an engaging with the clearing which permits and confers presence to what is present, the clearing in which presence presences, and that because "light presupposes openness [*das Licht, setzt diese, die Lichtung, voraus*]."[132] We are repeating, here, a turn to the origin, to the origin of what emerges in the present, to the origin of the present in presence, and still further to the origination of the emergence of presence, that is, to presencing [*Anwesen*].

Our concern in this work, then, is not at all principally with Heidegger's notorious poem of being. No doubt, the unfolding of metaphysical epochs, the rising and falling of crystallisations of the truth of being, finite disclosures of ordered economies of entities destined by the issuance of being, the great ontological send-off, can be traced in all their contours, caesuras, stanzas, principial sovereignties; in short, the "scansion of being," as Schürmann calls it,

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[130] "The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking" in *On Time and Being* (Trans. Joan Stambaugh). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. P. 64/71.
[131] Cf. Schürmann, p. 141. "Entities become phenomena when they appear, united with others, in a finite constellation which is their truth." I.e., within an epochal mode of presence.
[132] "The Task of Thinking", p 65/72.

could reveal the poietic constellations of truth, transient configurations of ontological light and shade, the aletheic orderings, which, for Heidegger, is history itself. And this thinking has its place and shape, to be sure, and by disclosing the place and shape of thinkings married to each era in the age of metaphysics. But we are here hazarding to attend not to the particular variations of shadow and light in which entities have been, or are now disclosed (one cannot talk of the will-be, in this case), the economic possibilities germane to particular arrangements of present entities, hidings and showings, absences and presences; rather, we are focussed on the chiaroscuro itself, the very interplay of light and shade, of unconcealment and concealment, of presence and absence which characterises all presenc*ing* as such.

Presencing is the originary appearing in some light, and thus out of some tenebrous periphery or demarcating margin; it is the very emergence into the field of presence. Quoting a few lines of Reiner Schürmann's will help to establish the distinction we are making and conduct our attention to the proper site. He remarks that:

> the identity between thought and the *originary* disarms man in another way: it deprives thinking of all references to entities. The description of the reversals in history [the anarchic shifts in aletheiological constellations, epochs of the truth of being] teaches us nothing about the *Ursprung*. It has to be *ersprungen*, attained by a leap. Originary thinking heeds such emergence for its own sake, and not for the sake of these entities. To advocate a 'leap' in thinking is therefore not to plead some form of the irrational, but to

> disentangle the two levels of the temporal difference: that of the 'original', in which the coming-about of presence is described as the birth of a more or less short-lived network of present entities, and that of the 'originary', in which that coming about is described without reference to entities.[133]

Deprived of the reference to entities, originary thinking is limned with reference to time. For this very reason, it can be said to be ahistorical, to the extent that its subject matter is outside the domain in and as which history occurs. Consider how originary thinking is not *essentially* an activity which occurs *in* time, not even in the way Heidegger's original thinking is attached to the essential unfolding or explicating of history as the truth of being, in following its epochal transmogrifications. It would be a mistake, however, to conclude from this that we can equate ahistorical with atemporal. Were the ahistorical to be equated with the atemporal, Heidegger would have failed to diverge from the thinking of metaphysics at all. A thinking which remains outside of both history and time is as thinking which espouses the eternal, which seeks to establish what is immutably true, essentially timeless and unchanging. Such a thinking which seeks to subordinate the world to the conservation of a particular mode of presencing, a constant presence ruled by an unltimate principial referent, is the thinking of metaphysics. Originary thinking is in no way outside of, or without

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[133]Schürmann, Reiner. *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Trans. Christine-Marie Gros). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990. p. 141.

time. Its temporality co-responds to the originary temporality of the coming-about of the event of presencing. Such an arising into presence is *the* ahistorical event which precedes and makes possible its various modifications in presence, which is the historical. "Presenc*ing*-absenc*ing* is the a priori event that makes it possible for any such order [epochal presence] to spell itself out in history."[134] But it is through the belonging together of absencing and presencing that the coming about of presencing happens at all, out of the absencing which releases it. Absencing is thus the 'expropriation' of which Heidegger begins speaking, it is the possibility which permeates all presencing, it is the possible presencing which is withheld on behalf of letting presencing presence, the absence which first frees presencing. Through the appropriation of absencing as expropriation of presencing, that is, as possibility, the openness of the future as 'to come,' as the possibility of coming-about, is privileged as the demodalised modality which enables the possibility of any modalised presence of presencing.

What we should be clear about is that thinking, in its belonging together with the originary, concerns itself with the topography of time-space, the very features which make up that which is always presupposed (always, before all else), which must be presupposed to presuppose, because it is wedded to the chiaroscuric layout of clearing, because, to say it another way, thinking is bound up essentially with the temporalising of temporality, woven into the very

[134] Schürmann, p. 141.

configuration of time. Thinking and time are in some way the same. Thinking, in asking about time, cannot abstract it from its temporality, any more than it could abstract thought from its thinking, for to do so would be to conceal the temporality of time, by reducing it to a static object of representation, and thus performing a reduction of time to the present. Of course, we cannot simply make the temporal process itself an object of thought, without again violating what we set out to think. The temporizing of time and the temporizing of thinking refuse themselves to representational metaphysics, which is one dimensional. Thinking thinks temporality only by letting itself become involved in the withdrawal which temporalises.

What is cleared between the past (has-been) and future (to-come), by the past and the future, is a modality of presence. A cursory look at presence revealed that all presence, before all presence, all coming to presence, that is, that presencing in general, inherently involves absencing. In other words, that showing is always at play with hiding, that, in short, unconcealment and concealment are indissociable, mutually constitutive rather than autonomously meaningful. This is a direct result of the step back from the present to its more originary aspect in presencing, where we found, as Heidegger notes, that "Not every presencing is necessarily the present [*Nicht jedes Anwesen ist notwendig*

Gegenwart]."[135] Presencing as possibility through absencing is more originary than the present.

When thinking is opened in its identity with time, it articulates the temporalising of temporality in standing out into a clearing of presencé permeated by two apodeictically unpresentable dimensions, with which it is nonetheless concerned, and consequently it divulges that it is not primordially riveted to entities, nor even to the present; rather, thinking dwells within the opening out of which presencing can happen, and is concerned with what presents itself as present in presence at all, only because presence itself is contextualised for thinking by absencing, and that means thinking is at bottom an opening which opens the possibility of presence as a possibility. In the same way that not every presencing is a present, thinking is neither necessarily nor primarily concerned with the present, but is always already also open to what is not-present, but which nonetheless presences, that is, lets presence, or inhabits presencing. In other words, thinking essentially [*wesentlich*] opens into presencing [*Anwesen*] because thinking, like presencing, cannot be disimplicated from absencing [*Abwesen*]. It is this line of thinking which is being explicitly drawn by Heidegger when he says, "The opening grants first of all the possibility of the path to presence, and grants the possible presencing of that presence itself [*Die Lichtung gewährt allem*

[135] TB, p. 13/14.

zuvor die Möglichkeit des Weges zur Anwesenheit und gewährt mögliche Anwesen dieser selbst]."[136]

Presencing itself never comes to presence. In presencing, nothing presences. What first becomes a possibility here is the coming to presence of presence. That which precedes and makes presence possible at all is presencing. And, moving still further towards the originary in the above passage, Heidegger isolates the open as what confers to presencing its possibility. We should take notice of two critical points here. First, presence is characterised out of the possibility of possibility. The very possibility of presence is founded upon what is itself determined in its possibility, as a possibility. In deferring the present to presence as a possibility, itself deferred to a ground in possibility (already possible only outside the scope of presence at all), deferred still again to the opening which opens up this series of possibilities, we must not miss to what extent Heidegger is revealing the precariousness of presence, the depth and primacy of its *possibility*, and the fundamental role of contingency and absence that is announced. With the possibility of presence is the possibility of absence, and likewise for presencing and absencing. The second point we must take note of here is how thinking exceeds the extension of thought, and the scope of presence, for "Thought can be given only where there is thinking."[137] As a corollary, thinking must explicitly extend into absence, i.e., into possibility,

[136] "The Task of Thinking", p. 68/75.
[137] WCT, p. 53.

indeed, in a more originary way than it deals in the currency of presence alone. Thinking grants the possibility of thought, like presencing provides the possibility of presence. It is incumbent on thinking that it take into its custody and make explicit the absencing which implicitly courses through all presencing.

For now, we want to see that as a possibility presence is an authentic *possibility*, and that means always one possibility among others, if even only accompanied by its own contingency, in this case the unrelenting possibility secured in absence, which haunts the very essence of presencing. It is this fundamental character of contingency determining the nature of open presence (that it is shot through with absence) which Heidegger accents elsewhere when he describes the ontological activity of resting. In his words, "Rest, in the presencing of what is present, is gathering. It gathers the rising to the coming-to-the-fore *with the hidden suddenness of an ever-possible absenting* into concealedness [*Die Ruhe im Anwesen des Anwesenden ist Versammlung. Sie versammelt das Aufgehen zum Hervorkommen mit der verborgenen Jähe des stets möglichen Abwesens in dir Verborgenheit*]."[138] Were we to decrypt this into language we have already adopted here, without alleging to render it in plain English, we could paraphrase it by saying the following: 'resting' is the original constellating of entities into orders of epochal truth, or interpretive configurations of presence. This ordering activity collects, or modalises, the very emerging of the emergence

[138] WCT, p. 237/241. (Translation altered).

of entities, the originary presencing, only in as much as this presencing is permeated with the absencing which is the condition of its possibility, and without which presencing could not let things be present in their presence. By the same token, thinking is open in this possibility, in presencing, because thinking emerges coextensively with time, which supply the limits for thinking.

How are we, explicitly, to understand these limits? What do they have to do, after all, with time? More importantly, perhaps, what is at stake with respect to thinking when we talk of these limits we share so essentially with time? Thinking has been explicated with respect to the aspect of the unthought which essentially belongs to what is called thinking. The provocateur in thinking is deeply benighted, withholding itself from the light of disclosure, the striking translucence of actuality, the present, and thus any thinking which thinks exclusively in terms of the present. Such withdrawal is the contraction which can be said to uncover the present, and grant it its essence, which means, that which lets the present be what it is by giving to it its limits. Without these essential limits there is no present, for "unlimited manifestation of everything potentially present is impossible."[139] The limits must therefore attend the present as such, and consequently any thought which thinks it. These attendant limits, these immediately gripping thoughts, we earlier determined to be past and future. Without them no present, for they are the limiting dimensions, the enfolding,

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[139] Schürmann, p. 143.

circumscribing dimensions of absence, the presence of which, as possibility, first grant the possibility of presence. It is their station never to be present, but in virtue of that precisely, they are as they are, to wit, absenting, and through them the present is as it is, namely presenting. In being the enabling condition of the presence of what is possibly present, the "actual" must be seen as subordinated to the possible.

The dimensions of time, for Heidegger, are not self-enclosed, substantive and static, but, quite distinctly, ecstatic. Time happens precisely because temporality is ek-static. It is in the way the future offers itself in its withdrawal that the absence which characterises the what-has-been of the past is brought to bear on presence; and conversely, it is out of the past as withheld from the presence that the future is determined as possibility for presencing. Indeed, it is "The reciprocal relation of both...[that] gives and brings about the present [*Der Wechselbezug beider reicht und erbringt zugleich Gegenwart*]."[140] The three dimensions of time, past, present, and future, "belong together in the way they offer themselves to one another. Their unifying unity can be determined only by what is their own; that they offer themselves to one another. But what do they offer to one another? Nothing other than themselves – which means: the presencing that is given in them. With this presencing there opens up what we call time-space [*gehört ihr Einander-sich-zureichen zusammen. Ihre einigende*

[140] TB, p. 13/13.

Einheit kann sich nur aus ihrem Eigenen bestimmen, daraus, daß sie einander sich reichen. Doch was reichen sie einander? Nichts anderes als sich selber und das heißt: das in ihnen gereichte An-wesen]."[141] The three dimensions of time are united in their origination of presencing. The originating source of presencing as possibility issues itself only inasmuch as it articulates itself as essential possibility, and that means it must issue as the interplay of presence and absence. Temporality's dimensionality is genuinely discontinuous because it is the expression of possibility. The unfolding of originary presencing takes the form of three inter-reaching dimensions of presence and absence which share a originating source.

Now we have asked the question so boldly
that the question is already its own answer.
- Franz Rosenzweig, *Science of God*

[141] TB, p. 14/14.

§6 Concluding Remarks

Thinking is obliged to think its own origination, it is thus obliged to think origination itself. We discovered that through placing itself in question, thinking was essentially concerned to reflect upon an originating source which withdrew, and in withdrawal revealed that thinking was essentially a questioning open to possibility. The originating source of thinking is the wellspring of possibility. Our questioning led us to discover temporality as that which characterises both time and thinking, such that thinking cannot, in the end, question itself without putting time in question as well. The originary temporality of thinking gives rise ineluctably to the originary thinking of temporality. Time is not, then, something thinking merely thinks about, but is an essential trait of thinking itself. Thinking is *zeitlich*. Any thinking which attempts to reflect upon its originating source, to recall its origination, must reflect upon the unthinkability of temporizing time by way of a metaphysics of presence. Such metaphysical conceptions of time are susceptible to being questioned along with the thinking which so conceives them. The understanding of time provided by metaphysics, tacitly or not, must be impugned, and that means questioned and accounted for more originarily. Confronted with the event of the emergence of possibility as discontinuous dimensions articulated through thinking, thinking must remain obliged to think the origination which is neither fixed, nor synchronous in its unity. Placing itself

in question is the authentic response to what is most worthy of thinking. *Das Bedenklichste*, what is most worth of thinking, that which most properly belongs to thinking is, quite plainly, thinking itself. In being called to think, thinking is conferred to itself, conferred in the first place at all. It is itself what is most worthy of thought, most wanting of being placed in question. Far from an obligation which could be disposed of, the obligation to think only tightens and becomes more pressing with further thinking.

1. Thinking does not bring knowledge as do the sciences.
2. Thinking does not produce usable practical wisdom.
3. Thinking solves no cosmic riddles.
4. Thinking does not endow us directly with the power to act.[142]

It is precisely the inexhaustibility of possibility, and the co-responding persistent self-displacing of reflective [*besinnlich*] thinking that constitutes the atelic, open movement of thinking. As Nancy underscores, "Sense [*Sinn*] is the openness of a relation *to* itself .... The *to* of the to itself ... is first and foremost the fissure, the gap, the spacing of an opening."[143] Never does thinking come to itself, come to fulfilment, but forges a path, or paths, as it tries to keep pace with the gaping of originary self-dislocation. Goalless, dis-entelich, thinking comes to

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[142] WCT, p. 159.
[143] Jean-Luc Nancy, "A Finite Thinking" (Trans. Edward Bullard, Jonathan Derbyshire, and Simon Sparks) in *A Finite Thinking*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003. P. 7.

pass in flux, perpetually respondent, as a keeping pace with the ever-modulating emergence into presence from absence, as a turning back to follow presencing as it arises, as an openness to the possibility of possible presencing. Thinking thinks when it co-responds to the movement of presencing, without attempting to extend or conserve its stay in presence, that is, when it leaves what presences its presencing and does not endeavour to assail it with anything in addition.[144] "*This primal corresponding*, expressly carried out, *is thinking*."[145]

Accordingly, there are only thinkings (plural), and we cannot offer an answer to the problem of what thinking is, or what must be thought. We can only provide a description of how thinking unfolds as a reflexive questioning piously waiting on the possibility of presencing, taking presencing and absencing into its custody, and guarding it against assault. Thinking is originary when it does what presencing does. Only by holding itself, its own origin in question, can thinking let itself be possible.

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[144] Cf. "On the Essence of Truth", p. 144, and previously quoted above.
[145] "The Turning" in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (Trans. William Lovitt). New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1977. P. 41.

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